



Mayor Sylvester Turner, City of Houston

Support for House Bill 17

March 25, 2019

The City of Houston is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of Dr. Greg Bonnen's House Bill 17. This comprehensive school safety bill is one of the highest legislative priorities for the Mayor's Commission to End Gun Violence.

First, some background on the formation and background of the Mayor's Commission:

In March of 2017, Mayor Turner announced plans to establish the Mayor's Commission Against Gun Violence. The Mayor, who has a lengthy legislative record advocating for schools and for responsible gun use, is inspired by young people who have organized to educate elected officials and the public about the need to improve school safety and effectively address gun violence issues on school campuses.

In May of 2017, he announced the names of 37 individuals who represent a cross-section of the Houston community to serve on his new Commission. The diverse group includes students, parents, physicians, law enforcement officials, gun-rights advocates, gun violence victims and members of faith-based and civil rights organizations, with Haley Carter as Chair.

Haley is a native Houstonian, MBA, retired United States Marine officer, former Houston Dash soccer player and a 2nd year law student at the University of Houston.

Mayor Turner gave the Commission the time and resources it needed to research and submit recommendations. He asked the Commission to provide recommendations before the next school year starts in the fall, and the rest before the start of the 2019 session of the Texas Legislature. Adopting active shooter building codes was at the top of the Commission's legislative priority list.

We would like to thank Dr. Bonnen's staff for sitting down with Haley and members of the Commission to discuss the specific legislative charge with regards to active shooter building codes for schools.

The Commission recommends legislation that mandates the establishment of active shooter building codes, and that Independent School Districts update their existing infrastructure in a manner that mitigates the threat of school shootings. School construction in many locations does not adequately address the very real threat of an active shooter on campus. Lack of door locks that do not require a key, glass walls around classroom and offices, lack of security cameras in key locations and lack of fully functional PA systems are indicators that regulation is needed.

All new school buildings should as a minimum standard have:

- Doors that lock from the inside, without a key, and can be unlocked and opened from the inside, without a key, once locked. (cost neutral)
- No classrooms should utilize glass or other transparent material as a wall(s) for classrooms or administrative offices.
- This does not preclude having windows that must have blinds or curtains that block view when needed. (cost neutral)
- All classes must be held within a classroom, or have a safe haven immediately nearby, should danger arise. The only exception would be athletic functions held outdoors. (cost neutral)
- All school campuses must have a fully functional PA system, tested regularly, which reaches all classrooms and hallways which can be used to warn occupants of danger. (cost neutral)
- All campuses must have an Active Shooter medical kit available in the main office to include tourniquets, bandages and other supplies typically needed to treat major trauma. (approximately \$300 per school)

All school campuses must have an adequate number of security cameras covering all entrances and hallways. The video feed should be readily available to the ISD Police Department. If there is no police department for the ISD, the video should feed to the dispatch center of the local police department responsible for responding to an emergency. (cost neutral for most larger school districts).

It is the Commission's hope that in supporting the framework set up within House Bill 17 that the Legislature would adopt these recommendations with regards to school safety measures. Mayor Turner again wishes to thank the Legislature for their time and effort in crafting this legislation and the in-depth work by Dr. Bonnen.

The City of Houston supports House Bill 17 and urges the Legislature to pass the measure.