



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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The Honorable Bryan Hughes
Chairman, Senate Committee on State Affairs

Dear Chairman Hughes and Members of the Senate Committee on State Affairs:

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 147 by Senator Lois Kolkhorst and Senate Bill 711 by Senator Charles Perry. As mayor of the fourth largest and most diverse city in our nation as well as the most populous city in the State of Texas, I strongly oppose these pieces of legislation.

One of every four Houstonian is foreign born, bringing immense diversity to our city, of which we are very proud. Legislation like SB 147 and SB 711 that singlehandedly targets people and companies headquartered in China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia or people who are majority stockholders of companies in these countries prohibiting them from purchasing or otherwise acquiring title to real property in this State is alarming and diminishes the fabric that holds our city together.

Since this bill was filed, I have had the opportunity to hear from several business owners, property owners, and others that are concerned of the implications of SB 147 and SB 711. Specifically, I have received much feedback from people of Chinese descent, of which there are hundreds of thousands in the Greater-Houston area. Given the troubled history of our country's policies with immigrants from China, I too am concerned of the negative impacts of this legislation.

Having served in the Legislature for 27 years, I am well aware of the partisan disagreements over public policy and the rhetoric that accompanies it. Moreover, during that time, I had the opportunity to work closely with my friend Senator Lois Kolkhorst as well as my friend Senator Charles Perry. It is my hope that by sounding the alarm on unintended consequences of these pieces of legislation, the Legislature will narrow the focus of the bills to widely agree to well acknowledged threats of national security.

As elected leaders, we have a moral responsibility to defend and protect the people we have been elected to serve. We must be very careful that we do not seek to penalize our foreign-born residents for the choices made by their native governments. In fact, the policies of those governments may be the reason they have sought new opportunities in our nation and cities across the State of Texas.

As this legislation moves throughout the legislative process, I urge you to join me in opposing both SB 147 and SB 711.

Sincerely,

Sylvester Turner
Mayor