



CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Police Department

Sylvester Turner, Mayor

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March 21, 2023



The Honorable Ryan Guillen
Chairman, House Select Committee on Community Safety
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairman Guillen and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chief Troy Finner and the Houston Police Department (“HPD”), thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 165 by Representative Ann Johnson that would have a significant impact on public safety.

Under current law, scenes where four or more people are targeted or injured that do not result in the death of victims are only charged as assaults with a deadly weapon—categorized as a second-degree felony. Additionally, these offenses cannot be stacked so sentences are not served consecutively, despite being part of the same series of events. By defining “mass shooting”, the appropriate punishments would be given for a shooting where people are hurt or injured but not killed.

HB 165 adequately addresses each of these concerns and would make committing an aggravated assault as part of a mass shooting punishable as a first-degree felony. Under this bill, “mass shooting” is defined as discharge of a firearm to cause, or attempt to cause, serious bodily injury or death to four or more persons during the same criminal transaction or during different criminal transactions but pursuant to the same scheme or course of conduct. HB 165 will also enhance the penalty for those convicted of a mass shooting and will allow stacking for more than one offense of aggravated assault out of the same criminal episode.

Any discharge of a firearm in a crowded area has the potential to kill or injure unintended victims. Shootings at mass gatherings are a persistent problem within the City of Houston. These incidents often occur at bars, night clubs, large parties, and in apartment complexes. They are also often perpetrated by gangs in the form of drive-by shootings. In many of the cases, the victims are innocent bystanders who were not a party to the actions leading to the offense.

In February 2022, Mayor Sylvester Turner introduced the One Safe Houston public safety initiative aimed at reducing violent crime in the City of Houston. This comprehensive plan in conjunction with the passage of HB 165 will give HPD the tools to arrest those violent offenders



who put our community in danger by shooting weapons at others indiscriminately and irresponsibly.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important issue to enhance community safety. I respectfully request your favorable consideration of HB 165.

Sincerely,

s/ *Jessica Anderson*

Jessica Anderson
Commander