



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
www.houstontx.gov

March 28, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schwertner
Chairman, Senate Business & Commerce Committee
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

Dear Chairman Schwertner and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opposition to Senate Bill 624 by Senator Lois Kolkhorst. As written, this bill would require additional permits to be obtained by developers to construct and operate wind and solar power facilities as well as establish new fees and conditions under which permits could be issued. We believe these requirements will directly strike at the viability of critical projects for the City of Houston.

As Mayor of the fourth largest city in the United States, my priority is the safety and security of all people in Houston. In the last seven years, Houston has faced seven federally declared disasters – including winter storm Uri and the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered a profound economic crisis. Climate change is real, and it is impacting cities across Texas every day. Following Hurricane Harvey, we realized we needed a strategy that would mitigate our exposure to climate change but also help save money, grow our economy, and improve the quality of life for residents. As a result, we created the Resilient Houston strategy and the Houston Climate Action Plan.

As you know, Texas produces more wind power than any other state and more solar power than any state besides California. Our business community believes that Texas is well-positioned to play a key role in energy transition, including by expanding the City's renewable capacity and leveraging our access to talent and energy financing. As an example, as part of its Energy Transition Strategy, the Greater Houston Partnership aims to take steps to support solar and wind development by actively attracting and retaining project developers, asset owners, and financial traders to Houston.

Additionally, our Sunnyside Landfill Solar Project will transform a site which has blighted the neighboring community and prevented economic development in the area for decades into the largest urban solar farm in the nation. The project has gained national and international recognition as a shining example of how cities can create jobs and address decades of environmental issues. It is expected to bring an estimated \$70 million in private investment to the community aimed at creating jobs and training opportunities in the solar industry, and it has already been permitted by both the Electric Reliability Council of Texas and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The Sunnyside Landfill Solar Project would be severely jeopardized by SB 624. Not only would SB 624 place undue burden on wind and solar developers and risk deterring investment in Texas, but it would also add significant administrative responsibilities to the Public Utility Commission of Texas when the latest Sunset Staff Report (2022-23) found that the Public Utility Commission is already woefully under-staffed and under-resourced.

Thank you for your consideration. The City of Houston's Mayor's Office of Resilience and Sustainability is available should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Sylvester Turner
Mayor