



# CITY OF HOUSTON

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April 19, 2023

The Honorable Reggie Smith  
Members of the House Committee on Elections  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

The City of Houston appreciates the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 4701 (H.B. 4701), relating to the review of ballot proposition language for certain political subdivision elections.

Passage of HB 4701 would negatively impact the local election process. HB 4701 also represents an unacceptable intrusion into the affairs of local political subdivisions and would constitute a significant erosion of home-rule authority.

The requirement that the attorney general review a home-rule city's ballot language is unduly restrictive and will interfere with the election process. The political subdivision ordering the election, with the requisite background and subject-matter expertise regarding the proposed measure at issue, is best situated to craft ballot proposition language that substantially submits the question with such definiteness and certainty that the voters are not misled.

The requirement that a political subdivision may not submit a proposition or alternate language after the 120<sup>th</sup> day before the date of the election would significantly hamper a city's ability to order an election, since it requires submission of ballot language far in advance of the deadline to order an election. Circumstances may arise, including the submission of a citizen-initiated petition, necessitating a charter amendment or other type of measure election after the 120<sup>th</sup> day before the date of the election. A political subdivision may order an election no later than the 78<sup>th</sup> day before election day. HB 4701 would impose an additional deadline and administrative hurdle for voters seeking to get an item on a city's ballot.

Regardless of the deadline imposed by HB 4701 for proposition language, the entire process significantly impedes local election administration. As soon as the deadline passes for ordering an election, the City must submit ballot language in multiple languages to the three counties administering its election. At that point, the City can make few, if any, changes to the ballot language or add additional, unnecessary

bureaucratic processes, or it will delay logic and accuracy testing of the ballot and printing of ballot by mail.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

DocuSigned by:

*Danielle Folsom*

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