



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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May 1, 2023

The Honorable Paul Bettencourt
Chairman, Senate Committee on Local Government
P.O. Box 12068- Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Bettencourt and Members of the Committee:

The City of Houston opposes the provisions outlined in House Bill 349 related to exemption of certain property owners from local drainage charges.

Local drainage charges are created pursuant to State law and are required to periodically review and justify adopted drainage charges. Drainage utility charges are utilized by municipal government to finance the maintenance, rehabilitation, and expansion of stormwater infrastructure. Municipalities rely on these segregated funds since they are unable to directly address these needs by use of the General Fund.

Stormwater drainage historically has not been viewed by the public as a basic utility. However, stormwater is a utility just as potable water, wastewater treatment, and water collection are utilities. Water and Wastewater charges are applicable to all users without segregating a specific group of citizens for discounted services.

An alternative to the proposed exemption would be to provide an opportunity for the public to donate to a fund to offset the drainage costs. An example would be the City of Houston's water fund. On every monthly water bill, there is a box on the statement where a donation can be made to the fund to help offset the cost for individuals needing assistance.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments to this proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

Stephen Costello
Chief Recovery Officer