



May 3, 2023

The Honorable Terry Canales
Chairman, House Committee on Transportation
P.O. Box 2910
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78768

Re: Support for House Bill 1863 authored by Representative Shawn Thierry

Dear Chairman Canales and members of the House Transportation Committee,

Good morning, I am Andrea French, Executive Director for Scenic Houston and today I am writing in support of House Bill 1863 by Representative Thierry. I am writing on behalf of Scenic Houston and Scenic Texas and Houston's sister chapters and affiliates in Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Galveston as we work together in combatting the visual blight and pollution one byway, streetscape, and neighborhood at a time across the State of Texas. One of our biggest challenges in fulfilling our missions to maintain and enhance our home state's scenic character is bandit signs.

All of us know and have seen the proliferation of bandit signs, or illegal signs, that spam our sidewalks, clutter our communities and, in many cases, land in our drains and waterways. Additionally, they dangerously block public and pedestrian spaces and are highly predatory with offers for fast cash, jobs, or cheap services that intentionally target vulnerable communities. A frequent sign stating, "We Buy Diabetic Strips" has become an underground business with diabetics selling their medical supplies for cash instead of for their health.

For years City of Houston Council woman Martha Castex -Tatum and other city staff and leaders have worked diligently to tackle this growing problem and the cost and time to do so continues to climb often leaving efforts feeling futile and overwhelming as repeat offenders increase their efforts unphased by current fines and penalties. One such repeat offender racked up well over \$300,000 in fines in one year – clearly making enough money with these signs to consider 300k simply the cost of doing business. This is not an acceptable way of doing business.

The higher fees, proposed in this bill, aim to dissuade current and potential repeat offenders at a rate that will drastically change their cost of doing business and their illegal practice of advertising. This illegal behavior and complete disregard for the dignity and safety of our communities does not represent our values as Texans, and it certainly is not how we expect our business community to operate to enhance the overall economic vitality and quality of life for all that live, work, and play across our great state.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at andrea@scenichouston.org or 713.629.0481

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea A. French".

Andrea French
Executive Director
Scenic Houston

