

ONE SAFE HOUSTON

Bonding Protocols



“It is incumbent for us to recognize that the backlog of criminal justice cases and the delay in the adjudication of violent offenders can also be exacerbated if bail bond amounts are reduced to a nominal level. Bail bonding companies are in some instances now requiring substantially less than the customary 10 percent required to post bond. ”

Mayor Sylvester Turner - February 2nd
Announcement “One Safe Houston”

The Mayor would go on to state the City of Houston was prepared to take unilateral action in making changes at the city level regarding bond practices

“I have instructed the City Legal Department to draft an ordinance for the consideration by the Houston City Council which would require that a bail bond company charge a premium which is equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bail bond set by the court. This would require that the cost of a bail bond be equal to what the public generally believes to be the cost of a such a bond rather than some lesser amount.”

However, the much more effective and holistic solution should involve all of Harris County. The Mayor directly addressed how that action should take place:

“I also call upon the Harris County Bail Bond Board to adopt a regulation requiring that all companies issuing bonds within Harris County charge a premium equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bond. If the Bail Bond Board were to adopt such a standard for the entire county, then the City would consider it unnecessary to move forward with the passage of the proposed ordinance. Otherwise, the City must act.”

In response, Mayor Sylvester Turner lauded the board’s decision. “I’m very gratified to see the Harris County Bail Bond Board adopt this policy today. When judges set high bonds for violent offenses, bail bond companies should not waive or reduce premiums, thus jeopardizing public safety.”

In just over 2 months, Mayor Turner was able to rally public support for this best practice, which is now the official policy for all of Harris County and with momentum to becoming a statewide law.

On March 9th, a recommendation of the Harris County Commissioners Bail Bond Board to require that bonding companies collect a minimum percentage of bail before posting a surety bond did not secure enough votes to pass. The breakdown of votes was 4-4, where five votes were needed to pass the proposal.

<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/criminal-justice/2022/03/10/420779/harris-county-bail-bond-fee-minimum-fails-despite-broad-support-for-the-measure/>

On March 10th, Senator John Whitmire said that despite the failure before the Bond Board, he would look to require a 10% requirement at the statewide level. The City of Houston will support this measure as it would insure best bond practices across the State of Texas.

<https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2022/03/10/state-senator-john-whitmire-plans-to-push-for-state-law-requiring-at-least-10-be-collected-on-bonds-before-accused-criminals-are-released/>

On April 13th, after continued public pressure, the 10% requirement was again considered before the Bail Bond Board, this time receiving six votes from members of the board. The policy is now in effect for all criminal courts in Harris County.

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Harris-County-officials-pass-bail-measure-17079356.php>

As such, the Houston City Council delayed and then canceled consideration on an ordinance that would require 10 percent premiums for bail bonds.