



# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Sylvester Turner**

Mayor

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September 21, 2020

The Honorable Kelly Hancock  
State Senate, District 9  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Larry Taylor  
State Senate, District 11  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Hancock and Chairman Taylor,

I have received your letter of August 24th regarding permitting for telecommunication and broadband infrastructure. Curiously, I had not received any complaints locally about our permitting process.

On behalf of the City of Houston, I accepted the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA) “5G Wireless Champion Award,” specifically for their appreciation in fostering an environment that encourages wireless industry investment and accelerates the deployment of 5G in Houston on September of 2018. The press release noted, “Houston is among the fastest at reviewing and approving permits and leads all cities in Texas with 548 permit approvals since September 1, 2017.”

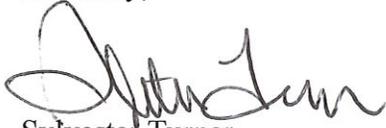
Additionally, the Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in his testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on January 22, 2020 specifically mentioned the City of Houston and our work with what you refer to as “underprivileged communities”. He stated:

*“Take Houston’s Second Ward. This is a part of the city that hasn’t always shared in the prosperity or investments that its neighboring communities have seen. In September, I spent time there with Mayor Sylvester Turner and a few of the broadband builders working to connect Houstonians. I talked to workers who were trenching fiber and powering up small cells to boost capacity there. Why is there so much private sector investment in that lower-income neighborhood? It’s because many households use a wireless connection as their only onramp to the Internet, and the infrastructure rules that the FCC and local officials put in place allow wireless providers to respond to this demand. Providing more capacity to the Second Ward helps its residents enjoy the benefits of fast broadband like the rest of Houston.”*

We have been able to achieve this recognition and progress despite policy from the State of Texas that has almost completely derailed our ability to issue permits efficiently. Given current litigation on the unconstitutional restrictions on our municipal programs, I hesitate to comment further except to say the Texas Legislature should work with, not directly against, local governments.

Given your concern for these “underprivileged communities,” I would ask that you join me in urging Governor Abbott to quickly take steps to expand Medicaid coverage immediately. As you are aware, Texans continue to have their tax dollars sent to every one of our neighbors (New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana) to cover their populations. Meanwhile, Texas remains the state with the highest rate of uninsured in the nation, and since 2017 that rate has been rising. We simply do not have an adequate infrastructure of healthcare coverage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "T".

Sylvester Turner  
Mayor