



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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September 8, 2020

The Honorable Giovanni Capriglione, Chair
The Honorable Oscar Longoria, Vice Chair
Texas House of Representatives
Appropriations Committee

Re: Support for Implementation and Appropriations for SB 20

Dear Chairman Capriglione and Vice Chairman Longoria,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public comment. I serve as Mayor Sylvester Turner's Director of the recently expanded Office of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence which focuses on addressing violence and accelerating equity from an economic empowerment lens. I wish to express my support for the full implementation and appropriation of funds toward SB 20 because many of its elements intersect with the work Mayor Turner's office undertakes at the City of Houston.

I applaud the State of Texas approaching the issue of human trafficking from the procurement side and prohibiting bids on contracts from those previously convicted of trafficking in persons.

- Mayor Turner signed Executive Order 1-56 in 2017 to address the potential for forced labor along Houston's supply chain as the largest line-item in our budget is labor.

His leadership on this issue was particularly important given the context of the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and the need to proactively avoid legal precedents set in the wake of Hurricane Katrina with forced labor occurring during the rebuilding process.

Houston also requires on-going efforts of those awarded city contracts with no previous convictions to engage in safe labor contracting practices and to immediately notify the City of Houston of unscrupulous labor practices of their sub-contractors.

On the victim side, many of our Mayor's Office case managed survivors and those of our partners have prior convictions resulting from their victimization, and Texas is taking a step in the right direction by offering non-disclosure for those eligible.

- Survivors are often prevented from securing financial independence because their prior convictions disqualify them from many workforce opportunities.

Mayor Turner recently announced our innovative MAKR Collective, an economic empowerment program in partnership with Magpies & Peacocks, the nation's only non-profit fashion house for survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence. The MAKR Collective provides survivors with job-ready and skills-based 30-day artisan and business training along with necessary supportive services, regardless of their prior victim-related convictions. Selected survivors have the potential to

fill readily available \$15 hourly administrative positions with our workforce partner or become independent makers earning up to \$20,000 annually.

Lastly, Mayor Turner's office welcomes the opportunity to apply for matching grant funds to implement a municipal sex trafficking prevention program that includes a media campaign.

- The City of Houston is especially well-equipped for this as we already have the fully developed Watch for Traffick media campaign with TV and radio PSAs, billboards, taxi and bus signs, and flyers, stickers, and tri-fold cards for general awareness and selected parts already translated into Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Urdu (Houston's top 5 spoken non-English languages).

Our implementation of Watch for Traffick in 2016-2017 generated over 93 million impressions and correlated with an 80% increase in calls and 61% increase in cases at the point of highest market saturation to the national hotline. Houston paid attention to labor trafficking with 7 signs focusing on this under-reported human rights violation in little known venues including restaurants and among traveling sales crews.

I look forward to the full implementation and funding of SB 20 especially as related to the above items Houston is known as a national municipal leader on.

Sincerely,
Minal Patel Davis, Director
Mayor's Office of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence
City of Houston