



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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April 6, 2021

The Honorable Philip Cortez
Chairman, Texas House Committee on Urban Affairs
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

Dear Chairman Cortez and Members of the Urban Affairs Committee,

I write to you today to request support for House Bill 4065 by Rep. Johnson, which will allow the Houston Land Bank (HLB) to be codified permanently within Texas statutes. This measure will enable HLB to perform activities relating to housing and community development with greater ease and transparency. This legislation is critical to both the expansion and preservation of affordable housing in the City of Houston.

Further, it will allow the City of Houston and the Land Bank to work as partners in responding to the shortage of affordable housing stock caused by increased population growth and the devastation of recent flood events and due to the increased cost of housing in our neighborhoods.

The bill will enable HLB to do the following:

- Complement the City's toolbox to provide equitable and inclusive development, and align state statute to the ongoing operations of this critical local government corporation.
- Quickly secure "problem properties" by proactively identifying and acquiring tax-delinquent properties without waiting for long-term delinquency to become evident.
- Support locally-driven neighborhood development by conveying properties into affordable housing to suit a range of housing types and modernizing HLB's disposition options to include economic development, greenspace community amenities, flood reduction.
- Ensure greater ties between the organization and the neighborhoods through community advisory committees

The Houston Housing and Community Development Department and the of Complete Communities has worked with the Houston Land Bank closely to great success in the past. The organization has demonstrated its value to the City by increasing production in the last year, with over 110 properties in development within two programs supporting Houstonians of 40-120% AMI. The organization has produced over 250 quality affordable homes since the beginning of Mayor Turner's term, and we am grateful to have an organization that can help me achieve his single family home ownership policy goals.

We believe that HB 4065 is the best tool to achieve this mission of ensuring that every Houstonian has a decent home they can afford in a community where they can thrive. I thank you for your consideration and urge you to support passage of HB 4065.

Sincerely,

Bill Kelly
Director of Government Relations – Mayor's Office, City of Houston