



Martha Castex-Tatum
City of Houston Vice Mayor Pro-Tem
City Council District K

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Terry Canales
Chair of the House Committee on Transportation
P.O. Box 2910 Austin, TX 78768
RE: House Bill 3823

Dear Chairman Canales and Members of the House Committee on Transportation:

I'm Martha Castex-Tatum, Vice Mayor Pro-Tem of the City of Houston, and Council Member for District K, which encompasses over 95 civic clubs and HOAs, and approximately 200,000 residents. I'm here today to speak in favor of HB 3823 by Representative Ramos.

We all know bandit signs are visual spam and litter our communities, many times ending in our drains and waterways. For 3 years we have actively been tackling this problem in my district and at times it seems futile. The current fines are so low these repeat offenders who consistently continue to blanket our communities with these unsightly signs basically laugh at our current civil penalties and simply consider them a cost of doing business.

I want to highlight today the predatory nature of many of these signs that are deliberately placed in minority or economically distressed areas. The sign "We Buy Diabetic Strips" is a gateway into what has become an underground business of people suffering from diabetes selling their medical supplies for cash instead of using as intended for their health.

The sign "Earn \$4000 cash per month" is also problematic. I called the number on the sign to find out how one would earn \$4000 a month and I was asked for my bank account number for direct deposits to be made to me.

As I began to call the phone numbers on these signs, the more I realized how covert and predatory many of these businesses actually are. The phone numbers are Google numbers or numbers where you have to leave messages for call-backs, which is just another way to avoid being given a citation for a practice, these rule breakers, know is illegal.

The hundreds of signs we are all picking up on a daily basis is costing the city of Houston hundreds of thousands of dollars at the detriment of more meaningful programs. We also expend a tremendous number of man hours needed to remove and impound these signs.

The higher fees will provide a stronger deterrent and the cost of doing business drastically changes for this illegal practice of advertising and helps us to protect our residents and our neighborhoods.

Respectfully,



Martha Castex-Tatum
Vice Mayor Pro Tem
District K