



**HOUSTON
PUBLIC WORKS**
Houston Permitting Center

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Joe Deshotel
Chairman, House Land and Resource Management
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Deshotel:

The Houston Permitting Center is strongly opposed to the passage of House Bill 1877 and 1878. While the two proposed bills differ in their approach, both would eliminate local government oversight of vacant buildings.

House Bill 1877 would prohibit a municipality from requiring an owner of a vacant building to improve the building to a condition that is better than would have been legally accepted before the damage occurred. Alternatively, House Bill 1878 would prohibit a municipality from requiring an owner of a vacant residential building to obtain a permit to conduct certain repairs to the building.

We believe both proposals stand in contrast to the best interests of our citizens and should be strongly opposed. The City adopts and enforces minimum standards of fire- and life-safety for residential and commercial construction to protect the public, and our permitting and inspection process is in place to ensure structures meet these minimum standards for the health and safety of the building's occupants.

Passage of these bills would allow owners to circumvent the permitting and inspection process and would effectively prevent the Houston Permitting Center from upholding the minimum standards adopted by the City. Owners of vacant buildings would be able to perform haphazard repairs on potentially unsafe properties and then rent and/or sell those properties to unsuspecting families/tenants without the benefits of having permits and inspections verify minimum code compliance to ensure fire- and life-safety.

HB 1877 and HB 1878 would set a dangerous precedent by allowing unsafe construction, that imposes a high risk to the public health and safety of our citizens, to permeate throughout Houston.

For these reasons we are strongly opposed to the passage of HB 1877 and HB 1878 in any form. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at 832-394-9555.

Sincerely,

Christon Butler, Deputy Director
Houston Permitting Center

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