



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
www.houstontx.gov

July 24, 2020

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson,

I write to express my profound objection to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposal that would allow single-sex homeless shelters to exclude transgender people from facilities that correspond with their gender identity.

The purpose of a homeless shelter is to assist the most vulnerable people in our society. This proposed rule undermines this very purpose. A study by The Williams Institute reported that nearly a third of transgender and non-binary people experience homelessness during their lifetime, including half of those who are Black, Middle Eastern, Multiracial, and/or undocumented immigrants. These are some of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our society.

Additionally, the National Transgender Discrimination Survey tells us that transgender women were almost twice as likely to have been physically assaulted in a shelter (29%) than transgender men (15%), and transgender respondents were more likely to have been assaulted (25%) than gender non-conforming respondents (20%). Nearly half of these respondents left an emergency shelter because of the treatment they experienced there—choosing to return to the street rather than remain in the shelter. Nearly 300 municipalities and 20 states have laws protecting shelter access -- many for decades. None of these jurisdictions report a rise in sexual violence or safety concerns as a result of these laws.

Last month, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay and transgender people from workplace discrimination. It would be shameful to take a step back in the wake of that historic step forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner".

Sylvester Turner
Mayor