



# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Sylvester Turner**

Mayor

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March 12, 2019

The Honorable Chris Turner  
Chairman, Higher Education Committee  
Members of the Higher Education Committee  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Turner and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I write today to urge you to support House Bill 826 by my friend, Chairman John Zerwas. HB 826 will establish a College of Medicine at the University of Houston. A UH College of Medicine would be focused on addressing a need that is currently unmet in both our urban and rural areas.

While Houston is home to the renowned Texas Medical Center, there are still pockets of our large metropolitan area that are underserved by primary care physicians. Some of the less-populated areas across Texas have even fewer doctors per capita. In fact, Texas ranks 47<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in the ratio of primary care physicians to population. To make matters worse, Texas is projected to need an additional 6,260 primary care physicians by 2030 to keep up with population growth.

The University of Houston is uniquely positioned to address the shortage of primary care physicians faced by our state. UH has a mission and values focused on addressing economic, cultural and quality-of-life issues. It also has the capacity and scale necessary to take on such an ambitious program. UH is a comprehensive university with colleges and programs that can serve to support and nurture the launch of a new medical school.

A UH Medical School will also help address our state's growing behavioral and mental health care access crisis. Primary care physicians are often the first to recognize the symptoms of mental illness. In the interest of integrated health, all UH CoM students will receive extensive training in mental and behavioral health, with additional training in how to treat these patients.

Over the next 25 years, the projected economic impact of a UH College of Medicine is \$25 billion, including 6,400 new jobs. Additionally, UH projects an increase in health research of \$125 million annually. \$31 million in private support has already been committed, including two endowed professorships and 4 years of tuition scholarships for the inaugural class of 30.

UH also has a commitment from HCA Healthcare Gulf Coast Division to establish 142 first-year resident positions by 2022, with an expansion to 389 by 2025. Residencies are critical, because doctors tend to practice close to where they did their residency. If we plant seeds today, Texas will reap the fruits tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a distinct "T".

Sylvester Turner  
Mayor