

October 8, 2020

Bobby Wilkinson  
Executive Director  
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs  
221 East 11th Street, Austin, TX 78701

Dear Director Wilkinson,

Since 2012, the City of Houston and its partners have permanently housed 18,000 individuals and families – with nearly 90% still housed two years after placement – resulting in an overall reduction in homelessness of more than 50% since 2011, making Houston arguably the most successful big city in the United States at reducing homelessness.

This success is directly due to the partnerships between state, local governments, and the private sector, along with the strong coordination among one hundred Houston non-profit and faith-based organizations. Specifically, our vital partnership with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has been instrumental in not just “responding” to homelessness, but permanently reducing it by effectively applying resources to comprehensively address the long-term, holistic needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

However, Houston’s success is in danger of tragic reversal if this draft rule is implemented.

Texans experiencing homelessness have challenging backgrounds – many would not be homeless otherwise. The changes in eligibility outlined in the draft Qualified Action Plan (QAP) from Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs do not reflect that reality.

A new section in this year’s QAP would effectively bar individuals with criminal records from being housed in supportive housing projects. Specifically, the proposed rule includes:

- Permanent denial if convicted of illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance
- Permanent denial based on criminal history of sexual assault, kidnapping, or arson

- At least a three-year denial for any felony conviction for discharge/display or firearm or illegal/deadly weapon, armed offense, stalking, obstruction or retaliation, violation of a protective order, or similar offense
- At least a two-year denial for non-violent felonies
- At least a one-year denial for Class A misdemeanors

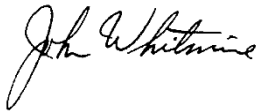
This proposal would prevent housing for a large number of Houston’s homeless – who are the intended beneficiaries of supportive housing.

- This proposal will create a huge class of untouchable citizens stuck on our streets. It places an insurmountable barrier to those who are trying to escape the streets and will undoubtedly increase homelessness.

The TDHCA’s management of tax credit projects is an integral part to our combined success reducing homelessness in Houston. However, it could quickly be undone. The unintended consequence of this draft plan will be to ensure that people with a troubled criminal history will return to crime again because they have no other option.

Instead of assisting people out of homelessness, the proposed rules erect new barriers to some of the most vulnerable members of our community and potentially sentence them to a lifetime of living on the streets. We strongly urge you to rethink this misguided plan.

Sincerely,



Senator John Whitmire  
District 15



Senator Borris Miles  
District 13



Senator Carol Alvarado  
District 6



Rep. Senfronia Thompson  
District 141



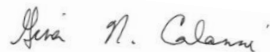
Rep. Armando Walle  
District 140



Rep. Ron Reynolds  
District 27



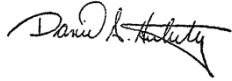
Rep. Jon Rosenthal  
District 135



Rep Gina Calanni  
District 132



Rep. Sarah Davis  
District 134



Rep. Dan Huberty  
District 127



Rep. Gene Wu  
District 137



Rep. Harold Dutton  
District 142



Rep. Jarvis Johnson  
District 13



Rep. Anna Eastman  
District 148



Rep. Christina Morales  
District 145



Rep. Ana Hernandez  
District 143



Rep. Shawn Thierry  
District 146