



July 10, 2017

Harris County Commissioners Court
1001 Preston St, 9th Floor
Houston, TX 77002

The 85th Legislature passed Senate Bill 4 (SB 4), the “show-me-your-papers” law, scheduled to take effect on September 1, 2017. We were extremely disappointed to see the state’s leadership endorse legislation that strips local control from Harris County, incentivizes racial profiling, and makes our communities less safe.

Per your agenda, Commissioners Court is scheduled to discuss possible county responses to SB 4 during its upcoming meeting. We strongly encourage you to join other urban counties like Bexar, Dallas, Travis and El Paso in the consolidated lawsuit against SB 4, *El Cenizo, Texas, et al. V. State Of Texas, et al.*

Throughout the legislative session we heard law enforcement officials, local governments, civil rights organizations and religious leaders each raise alarming points about SB 4’s widespread, adverse impact. Your own constitutional rights and those of your constituents are violated by SB 4.

We understand some of the reasons you may be hesitant to join the lawsuit. However, it is imperative that the 4 million residents of Harris County be represented during the deliberations in federal court. Harris County faces different circumstances than other local entities and has separate and distinct interests that are not adequately protected by the existing parties in the lawsuit.

Ultimately, SB 4 contains numerous provisions that simply cannot be allowed to take effect. SB 4 would prevent local law enforcement leaders from setting their own policies to work with the communities under their jurisdiction. It would further allow individual law enforcement officers to decide on their own whether and how to question individuals about their immigration status, creating a troubling path to unchecked racial profiling. This will have a chilling effect on crime reporting in vulnerable neighborhoods, and make our community less safe.

Further, the law prohibits elected and appointed officials like yourselves from endorsing a policy that is counter to the law, or risk removal from office and severe fines. Harris County will have to choose between enforcing a blatantly unconstitutional law or facing strict punishment from the state for not complying. We believe that our local officials and local law enforcement know the best way to set policies that keep us safe and protect vulnerable communities.

Our diverse population is a boon to our local economy and an integral part of what makes Harris County so great. We must do all we can to stop SB 4’s discriminatory provisions from taking effect.

Thank you for all you do for Harris County, please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Whitmire in black ink.

Senator John Whitmire, District 15

Handwritten signature of Sylvia Garcia in black ink.

Senator Sylvia Garcia, District 6

Handwritten signature of Borris Miles in black ink.

Senator Borris Miles, District 13