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***City of Houston Legislative Principles
For the 86th Session of the Texas Legislature***

City of Houston Mission Statement

The City of Houston will focus its proactive legislative efforts on the enhancement of life in Houston through emphasis on public safety and criminal justice initiatives; economic development and increasing jobs; protecting the quality of life; improving mobility; creating complete communities; working towards creating a healthier environment; providing affordable housing opportunities; and making the government more responsive, transparent, and fiscally responsible.

All of this must be pursued with a focus on regional cooperation, preserving local decision making, and ending unfunded state mandates.

Regional Cooperation/General Government

Oppose all unfunded state mandates that negatively affect the operations of the City of Houston fiscally, by requiring state micro-management of local programs, or by limiting the City's local authority, public safety, revenue collection, city operations or other local programs.

Oppose diminishing the City of Houston's regulatory authority, water rights, and representation on the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) Board of Directors, Port of Houston Authority, or other entities. Support and protect the City's authority in its rights of way and on municipal premises.

Support proportionate funding and financing models by the State and other relevant units to assist Houston in meeting its needs including air quality, health care, public safety, housing, transportation, disaster recovery, and infrastructure development.

Public Safety/Criminal Justice

Support improvements in the ability to train, deploy, and fund emergency operations and public safety personnel. Support legislative and administrative efforts to assist the City of Houston in preparation for and prevention of acts of terrorism and emergencies, including the equitable, threat-based distribution of Homeland Security funds.

Support improvements to the Criminal Justice Codes, Juvenile Justice Codes and Transportation Code.

Support legislation to address the growing problem of substance use, with a particular focus on the opioid epidemic, and the ramifications of these drugs in society. Support efforts to treat addiction as a substance use issue instead of a criminal justice issue.

Support legislation to expand mental health system capacity and best practices through increased investment in facilities and continued services for mental health consumers.

Support legislation that expands mental health courts and jail diversion programs.

Support legislative efforts to prevent and to combat violent crimes by repeat violent offenders. Support legislation to reduce gun violence.

Support state funding and legislative efforts to support the nationally recognized Mental Health Division, HPD's Homeless Outreach Team, and the Mayor's Office for Homeless Initiatives.

Neighborhood Improvement and Quality of Life

Support technical legislation that assists the City's homeowners and strengthens neighborhoods, environment and quality of life, as well as neighborhood and park programs.

Support legislation that reduces unnecessary regulatory burdens for removing dangerous buildings and urban blight.

Support legislation that enhances consumer protections for citizens and empowers low to middle income residents.

Protect state historic preservation tax credits for both nonprofit and for profit corporations owning historic properties.

Economic Development

Support legislation enhancing economic development and fostering job creation in regional growth areas. Support legislative efforts to promote inner city redevelopment including the creation and maintenance of quality affordable workforce housing. Support legislative and administrative initiatives to improve the economic viability of the Houston Airport System, including funding for the Spaceport Trust Fund.

Support efforts that allow for continued cooperation between municipal management districts and other jurisdictions to enhance community development in Texas cities.

Support job creation through cultural tourism efforts including funding for the Texas Commission on the Arts, the State Cultural District Grant Program, as well as full funding for Texas Tourism.

Environment & Public Utilities

Support legislative and administrative efforts to assist the Houston region in improving air quality and addressing flooding/drainage challenges. Support initiatives for additional green space, urban forestation and park enhancements.

Support legislation strengthening local governments' regulatory authority over energy industry participants to protect consumer interests and make delivery systems more reliable and resilient. Support legislation expanding the meaningful input of local governments to state agencies with oversight of energy industries.

Support legislation that protects adequate compensation for the use of City of Houston property and public rights-of-way.

Support legislation to give local residents more influence in environmental permitting in their neighborhoods.

Education

Support legislation to enhance after school programs and summer programs for youth.

Support legislation to improve education, health and safety, literacy, arts and library programs.

Support legislation to emphasize opportunities for youth to ensure our workforce remains competitive.

Support additional funding for the TexShare and TexQuest shared online resources.

Support reforms to the State's education finance system that halt the practice of requiring recapture of funds for urban school districts that are deemed "property wealthy" but have a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students.

Support the community schools model that promotes city-wide collaboration to support local schools with wrap around services and resources.

Support increased state funding and investment in research and development at institutions of higher learning. Support incentives to institutions of higher learning to collaborate with local government entities to assist in collaboratively solving public issues.

Support arts education and access initiatives, increasing the scope of the Texas Commission on the Arts to include arts education and expanding the Arts Department at the Texas Education Agency.

Support expanding options by which local school districts can retain control of their school system to avoid sanctions due to poor performance records.

Health

Support legislation and funding for expanded health care coverage and access for Texans, including continued progress on behavioral health.

Support expanded capacity for substance use treatment in the Houston area, as well as fully funding Graduate Medical Education positions to increase our healthcare workforce.

Support funding for research into health care related initiatives to grow Houston's economy, and trauma funding to improve Houston's ability to respond to emergencies.

Support legislation that expands services to victims of human trafficking, including appropriate services for housing, medical care, behavioral health care, and assistance with job placement and job training. Support strengthening ability of law enforcement to prosecute human trafficking where necessary.

Mobility

Support legislation to expand transportation funding for regional connectivity, project implementation, congestion relief and enhanced mobility to enable economic opportunity in the region. Pursue balance in the region's allocation of transportation funding based on the region's population, projected growth, vehicle miles traveled, and public transportation efforts.

Support major infrastructure projects creating transportation options for Houstonians to travel to and from the city.

Support legislation that provides resources to the Port of Houston, the Houston Airport System, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO).

Harvey Recovery

Support legislation and appropriations that provide state resources and streamlined services for residents, including access to the state's "Rainy Day Fund" for Harvey Relief.

Advocate for the State of Texas to provide "Local Match" money to assist local governments in paying for reconstruction and recovery services.

Support new state initiatives that allow for local governments to access resources to more quickly provide financial recovery services, such as previous zero interest loans from the Water Development Board.

Advocate for expanded public health resources for impacted communities. Support expanded state programs for trauma informed care, especially for Houston students in school based clinics, that are dealing with the effects of Hurricane Harvey.

Other

Support, where possible, other local governments, school districts, local colleges, universities and medical institutions, health care providers, non-profits, film, arts and tourism.