

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1196

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS

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Hearing Date: April 7, 2021 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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Eric Kunish, Advocacy Chair

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAM) Central Texas Affiliate

Austin, TX

I am for this bill because it helps homeless individuals qualify for resources and opportunities.

Marilyn Hartman

Member and Advocate, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Central Texas

Austin, TX

I support this bill; please pass it.

David Evans, CEO

Integral Care, Travis County Mental Health Authority

Austin, TX

Integral Care has supported our homeless community for 20 years with a goal of moving people from the streets into housing as quickly as possible. Our guiding philosophy is housing first. Our specialized teams use housing as a health intervention to provide support to individuals from homelessness to housed. Integral Care builds relationships with individuals living on the street in order to connect them to services that support their mental and physical health – providing direct care in the community and at our clinics. Once housed, we provide ongoing care to individuals in their homes – either owned by Integral Care or privately-owned apartments in the community. We provide access to housing and support services to approximately 956 individuals including but not limited to:

- Therapists providing counseling and emotional support
- Case managers helping clients manage day-to-day life needs and maintain housing
- Psychiatrists and nurses providing medical support for mental illness and substance use
- Employment specialists helping clients find and keep jobs that match their skills and interests
- Peers who have experienced homelessness, a mental illness or substance use disorder providing emotional support
- Benefits specialists helping clients apply for benefits to help secure housing

Among individuals experiencing homelessness, lack of identification is a common occurrence. Not having identification creates difficulty in accessing vital resources including but not limited to -- medical care, temporary assistance, securing employment, housing and accessing services from government agencies. House Bill 1196 eliminates the barriers to obtaining identification for individuals experiencing homelessness by waiving fees for the issuance of personal identification. Barriers to obtaining identification include precarious or unstable housing with no permanent address, the high cost of obtaining identification for those without steady income, and inaccurate reporting of personal information -- especially affecting individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

Difficulty obtaining identification, particularly due to a lack of funds, is a significant barrier for many of our clients. Currently there is no specified state funding to assist individuals in obtaining formal identification. An ID is the first step to gaining self-sufficiency, connecting individuals to resources and helping bridge the gap between homelessness and reintegration into society. Currently, states including South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia (among others) waive fees for individuals experiencing homelessness to obtain identification. House Bill 1196 alleviates one of the greatest challenges for individuals experiencing homelessness in our state. Acquiring an ID is the first step in maintaining a safe place to live as well as access to appropriate

Printed on: April 12, 2021 4:20 PM

support services. With these supports in place, recovery from homelessness, mental health issues and substance use disorder begins.

Linda Mikolajek, Ms  
Nami central Texas  
Austin, TX

Dear committee members, I am writing to ask you to please support HP 1196. I think it will be beneficial for homeless individuals to be issued a birth certificate and ID certificate and TDL. It is hard to imagine how a person can deal with day to day Press next activities when you don't have this authorization. Homeless people have a tough enough... Please support this bill number 1196.

Bethany Castro  
self, nonprofit director  
Victoria, TX

My name is Bethany Castro and I support HB 1196. If this bill passes, Texans experiencing homelessness will have access to obtaining IDs needed to navigate our current systems. Without a valid ID, people are unable to get connected to school, gain employment, or access community resources. By passing this bill, you'll help reduce the financial burden on our unhoused neighbors to get a basic need like an ID. The process to obtain identification after it has been lost or stolen is nearly un navigable- by eliminating the need to pay fees to obtain new copies of documentation this process will become that much less arduous. There are also many provisions in this bill to ensure those who would take advantage of this program are actually homeless and seeking services from a shelter or transitional living facility- not just someone who is trying to get out of paying for replacement identification. This is a smart move.

Sarah Soule-Jensen  
SELF  
Austin, TX

My name is Sarah Soule-Jensen and I support HB 1196. If this bill passes, Texans experiencing homelessness will have access to obtaining IDs needed to navigate our current systems. Without a valid ID, people are unable to get connected to school, gain employment, or access community resources. By passing this bill, you'll help reduce the financial burden on our unhoused neighbors to get a basic need like an ID. I have worked in crisis and community mental health efforts here in Austin for almost 5 years and the expectation we have on these vulnerable communities to keep track of these gate-keeping documents is absurd.

Bri Sowers, Legislative Intern  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
Austin, TX

Hello! My name is Bri Sowers and I'm a legislative intern at the National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter and I am encouraging you to support HB 1196, which would enable individuals that are experiencing homelessness to access their birth record and be issued a driver's license or personal identification card free of cost.

Texas currently requires multiple proofs of residence, proof of social security number, a passport or birth certificate, and proof of legal name change history to obtain a valid identification card. For individuals experiencing homelessness, however, compiling the required documents and providing the financial payment is often a complicated and time-consuming process. And without a valid form of identification, Individuals experiencing homelessness are unable to apply for federal, state, or local social service programs, such as SNAP or financial assistance, further creating a gap between vulnerable populations and the ability to access essential services. Unstable housing with no permanent address and high financial costs are two of the most common barriers that individuals experiencing homelessness face when trying to obtain identification. With the implementation of HB 1196, a

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permanent address and financial costs will no longer restrict individuals experiencing homelessness from obtaining valid identification.

Eliminating financial barriers and a physical address requirement for obtaining valid, personal identification for individuals that are experiencing homelessness reduces yet another obstacle to applying for housing, obtaining employment, and many other crucial processes that are imperative to accessing the most basic needs for survival. NASW-TX stands in support of Representative Hinojoa's initiative to ensure that a lack of valid identification for Texans experiencing homelessness is no longer a barrier to accessing and receiving social services, and we hope that you will too!

NASW-TX

Daniel Kuehn

Texas Homeless Network

Austin, TX

My name is Daniel Kuehn and I support HB 1196. If this bill passes, Texans experiencing homelessness will have access to obtaining IDs needed to navigate our current systems. Without a valid ID, people are unable to get connected to school, gain employment, or access community resources. By passing this bill, you'll help reduce the financial burden on our unhoused neighbors to get a basic need like an ID. Our system asks homeless individuals to gather multiple documents, provide a physical address, and pay fees that creates barriers to obtaining an ID. If passed this bill would open up many of the services our homeless population need to get back into housing and into the workforce. We are a strong and powerful state that should take pride in how it treats it's most vulnerable and become an example for the rest of our country. Thank you for your consideration.

Skyler Korgel

Self, Manufacturing Engineer

Weatherford, TX

I support HB 1196 and urge the committee to report it favorably out of committee.

This bill will make accessing vital documents vastly more accessible and targeted to Texans experiencing homelessness that can help them in turn access services and resources more easily to improve their quality of life. Please vote favorably on this bill in committee and on the floor!