

PUBLIC COMMENTS

SB 475

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: May 10, 2021 8:00 AM

Jill Sklar, Jackson County Judge

Jackson County

Edna, TX

Dear Chairman Paddie and Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

I am writing today to give my support to SB 475 by Senator Nelson. In May of 2019 Jackson County was subject to a ransomware attack. The hackers penetrated our system, encrypted our data, and demanded a large sum of money in exchange for the information they captured. Jackson County was not prepared for such an event. As County Judge I spent the first 48 hours just trying to locate the resources that could possibly help us get answers to our many questions. Our saving grace was the Department of Information Resources and the Texas Military Department. Although it took about twelve days to get the team in place and boots on the ground, the response team did a tremendous job in getting us back up and running. We are forever grateful.

Jackson County is a small county and we do not have a lot of resources at our disposal for our IT infrastructure. There are three aspects of SB 475 that would be a great benefit to us and many other entities across Texas. First, the bill utilizes universities to help counties improve and safeguard their IT infrastructure. We had a vulnerable system in 2019, but didn't know the extent of our weakness. Utilizing outside experts to evaluate and improve upon our system could have helped us avoid the disaster all together. Second, the bill provides regional working groups and cybersecurity experts to assist in responding and recovering from an event like ours. Having groups identified and regionally located would have been extremely beneficial to us immediately following our cyber disaster. Lastly, an organized volunteer network would have greatly supported the response and recovery efforts with little disruption to our services. Instead it took us several weeks to get back up and running in an efficient manner.

Please support SB 475 as it will provide a multitude of resources that would greatly benefit local governments. Cybersecurity is a huge challenge, especially in rural areas like Jackson County where resources are limited. Having experts organized, close to home, and ready to respond could make a huge difference in ensuring local services continue in a safe and efficient manner for our constituents across Texas.

Sincerely,

Jill S. Sklar
Jackson County Judge