

PUBLIC COMMENTS

SB 500

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Hearing Date: May 18, 2021 8:00 AM

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Kathern cater

Self

Goodrich, TX

Cps lied to Judge Brown and had my granddaughter arrested on false allegation They signed off on her case and she moved out of my home and my husband and I had him. They went behind our back and got judge to give them custody. She did not have her son and arrested her on interference with child custody. 200,000 k bond

Heather Cater

Self

Goodrich, TX

Cps had me arrested on a 200,000 k bond with false allegation. I gave temp custody to my grandparents after they closed my case so I could fix up my trailer

The went behind our back and told lies to Judge Brown to get custody and I did not have my son or living with him. I want justice and my son returned

Lee Spiller, Executive Director

Citizens Commission on Human Rights-Texas

Austin, TX

We support this bill because it gives cities and counties who choose to regulate boarding homes another tool to get the bad actors out of the business.

In the late 1990's or early 2000's, an unlicensed group home in Austin was shut down, and the Austin American Statesman referred to conditions that were overcrowded, horrible and abusive. We were able to identify other addresses that were run by the same people and get those looked into.

2007- Texas State Senator Elliot Shapleigh referred to our state's poorly regulated system of "boarding homes" for persons with disabilities as "Where Trouble Calls Home." He said this:

"Some operators are good people trying to help the disadvantaged. But others are predators – as many as half of those in business, some officials and advocates say. Some drive luxury cars, while their residents trade \$623 monthly Social Security disability checks for Dickensian squalor and a diet of bologna sandwiches, Ramen noodles and food-pantry handouts. Some have run unlicensed homes for years despite court orders and promises to quit."

2009- Representative Menendez filed legislation that allowed cities to require that these facilities to be registered and regulated on a local level. We would have preferred statewide regulation but unfortunately the sentiment at that time was that this would be too expensive.

2012- a fire killed four residents at a boarding home in San Antonio.

2013- the City of Houston gave a presentation on what they find in the worst of boarding homes. Conditions adversely affecting residents included lack of oversight, lack of staff training, residents being treated like property, and in some cases Social Security

Printed on: May 21, 2021 12:59 PM

and Food Stamp diversion and fraud.

2015- a boarding home in Austin came under investigation after Austin police arrested a woman for felony assault on the elderly. According to KVUE-TV, the facility had moved to that address in February and by August police had been dispatched to the address 75 times. Residents complained about no air conditioning and problems with bedbugs and lice.

2017- two more died after an illegal boarding home in Houston caught fire.

2020- a Houston boarding home resident died. According to media accounts he'd been tied so tightly to a chair that the cords cut his wrist. He eventually developed sepsis and died. The alleged perpetrator has since been criminally charged. In a related "home", Adult Protective Services reportedly removed over 30 residents who were living there at the time.

This is not to say all boarding homes are bad. Far from it. But the "rogue" homes give the whole industry a black eye.

As I stated at the beginning of this testimony, we support the bill.

But the truth is, it shouldn't be up to our cities or counties to regulate boarding homes on a piecemeal basis.

Our state should pony up the dough to do this as a statewide regulatory action through DADS.

Jane Malin

NAMI Greater Houston

HOUSTON, TX

I support this very important bill that addresses a terrible problem for vulnerable residents of boarding homes, including many with mental illnesses. This bill amends the Health and Safety Code to create a Class B misdemeanor offense for operating a boarding home facility without the required local permit from the applicable municipality or county, to make it easier to obtain warrants. It also helps law enforcement access these homes to ensure protection of vulnerable residents.