

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety
For HB 347

Compiled on: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 5:28 PM

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Hearing Date: March 14, 2023 2:00 PM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Maggie Luna, Policy Analyst & outreach coordinator
Texas Center for Justice and Equity/Statewide Leadership Council
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Good afternoon Chairman Guillen, Vice-chair Johnson and members, my name is Maggie Luna, Lead organizer for Statewide Leadership Council/ Policy Analyst and Community Outreach Coordinator for Texas Center for Justice and Equity. I have experience with DFPS, in 2015 I lost custody of my 3 children and I am in favor of HB 437 and I am writing to ask you to support HB 347. AResearch shows that any form of contact with law enforcement can lead to a significant source of stress and trauma for children and their families.

Children who experience any interaction with law enforcement and DFPS, such as being stopped, questioned, or even searched, can leave children feeling helpless, scared and confused. These experiences can be particularly traumatic for children who have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination, these kids are more likely to experience intense trauma responses such as anxiety and depression following interactions with Law enforcement. We must consider the damage that is being done to children from witnessing law enforcement interactions with family members or loved ones. When parents or other family members are arrested or detained, children have been found to experience a range of emotions including fear and confusion from the disruption of their daily routines and the uncertainty surrounding the future their lives. This can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and well-being. Trauma interferes with the development of the brain and may lead to difficulties with emotional regulation, learning, and social relationships.

Additionally, families may experience trauma from systemic issues such as racial profiling or discriminatory policing practices. It is essential that we limit law enforcement officers from increasing their risk of traumatic interactions with children and families by calling DFPS. The department can increase the effects of trauma. Utilizing all available options can create safer and more supportive interactions with children and families, minimizing the risk of family separation.

Please vote in favor of HB 347 and consider that interactions with law enforcement and DFPS have long-lasting effects on mental health and well-being. It is crucial that we eliminate interactions with the DFPS and support the well-being of all members of the family increasing safety in the community.

Thank you,
Maggie Luna
Statewide Leadership Council