

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources
For HB 3781

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Hearing Date: April 9, 2025 8:00 AM

Ted Boriack, Mr
self (engineer), Water Protection Association of Gonzales County
Waelder, TX

This bill HB3781 should in no way fund any groundwater facilities located within the Gonzales County Underground Water Conservation District to install more groundwater wells and pipe to transport groundwater out of Gonzales County. The Gonzales District has done a horrible job of managing groundwater over the years by granting permits for over 92,200 acre-ft/yr of Carrizo groundwater -- far in excess of the MAG volume of 47,584 acre-ft/yr. The vast majority (70,990 acre-ft/yr 77%) of the permitted water has been to transporters that take the water from family farms and ranches and pipe it to the cities. The cities then waste much of the water through broken pipes and generally sloppy distribution systems. The state has sacrificed the future of Gonzales County for the benefit of more populated counties, leaving the family farms and ranches in an impossible situation. The state should include funds to compensate landowners that have had their water taken from their land without compensation, which is a violation of the state constitution since the groundwater is the personal property of the landowner. The state should allocate at least a \$1 billion fund to compensate the rural areas for the massive taking of groundwater from their land.

Guadalupe Fernandez
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Houston, TX

Chairman and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee,

Bayou City Waterkeeper offers these comments on HB 3781. This bill is a positive step towards providing essential water and sewer services to economically disadvantaged communities, offering a vital pathway to access previously denied infrastructure. It offers the potential to significantly improve public health, sanitation, and overall quality of life in these underserved areas by facilitating much-needed infrastructure projects that might otherwise be financially infeasible. Importantly, the bill's consideration of funding for projects in areas developed before current model rules ensures that older, potentially underserved communities are not excluded from accessing these vital services.

Bayou City Waterkeeper supports the goal of extending essential services to communities in need. However, we also recognize the importance of careful consideration regarding the bill's implementation. We are concerned that waiving the enforcement of model rules could potentially lead to the construction of water and sewer systems that do not meet current safety and quality standards, potentially resulting in long-term negative consequences for public health and the environment.

Therefore, we recommend that any implementation of HB 3781 includes robust mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of high standards for water and sewer infrastructure and the long-term sustainability of these projects, without unduly limiting access for communities seeking infrastructure support. Careful consideration of implementation strategies and strong oversight will be necessary to balance the critical need for expanded access with the imperative of maintaining appropriate safety and quality standards and ensuring financial viability.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please contact Guadalupe Fernandez at guadalupe@bayoucitywaterkeeper.org or Usman Mahmood at usman@bayoucitywaterkeeper.org with any questions.