



CITY OF HOUSTON

John Whitmire

Mayor

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March 19, 2025

The Honorable Ken King
Chair, House Committee on State Affairs
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: House Bill 1584

Dear Chairman King and Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to express the City of Houston's strong support for House Bill 1584 (HB 1584).

The City of Houston's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) works closely with key stakeholders to prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters, encompassing natural and human-caused events. Utility providers, including water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, and communications are critical to serving the residents of our communities before, during, and after an incident or event.

On an annual basis, OEM collaborates with partners to create a list of prioritized facilities and provides that list to CenterPoint Energy for them to identify and prioritize during power restoration efforts. These partners include the Houston Fire Department, Houston Police Department, Houston Public Works, Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC), medical providers and hospitals, Houston Health Department, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the American Red Cross.

For the Houston region, during an incident, critical infrastructure and public safety facilities are prioritized, with water and wastewater facilities, hospitals, police, fire stations, and communication facilities receiving the highest priority.

As an example, Hurricane Beryl made landfall on July 8, 2024, and the Houston metro area had approximately 2 million customers that were left without power. Although many of the customers had power restored within 7 days, the last customers were restored 11 days after the storm. On the night of July 10th, after several calls, emails, and text messages with electric utility leadership, the City of Houston still was experiencing power outages for several key pieces of critical infrastructure, including water repump stations and wastewater lift stations that conveyed millions of gallons of potable water and/or wastewater throughout the region. This delayed power restoration put the water system at risk of a boil water notice. Eventually, the power and critical services were restored. Following Hurricane Beryl, the City of Houston and our electric provider has had numerous follow-up meetings to discuss and mitigate the Beryl challenges. As a result, the electric provider has updated and modified circuit priorities.

The City of Houston appreciates that HB 1584 would codify what we are already working toward in the Houston region. HB 1584 requires the Public Utilities Commission to create a rule to adopt criteria for determining whether a facility is a facility for which electric service is considered crucial for the protection or maintenance of public safety. By requiring utilities provide an online mechanism for facilities to request inclusion on the list, to disclose those facilities, and to share the list with local emergency management agencies, the utilities and cities can more appropriately plan resources for power restoration and those timelines.

We appreciate our partnerships with our public and private utility partners to help OEM identify and prioritize critical facilities and associated services. Their services are critical to provide essential services to the residents of our communities. We are grateful for their willingness to work with OEM, and other key stakeholders, to annually evaluate new facilities, reevaluate existing facilities, and establishing or modifying priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the City of Houston's support for House Bill 1584 (HB 1584).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Mason". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and "M".

Brian Mason
Director of the Office of Emergency Management
City of Houston