



# CITY OF HOUSTON

**John Whitmire**

Mayor

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May 12, 2025

The Honorable Jeff Leach  
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairman Leach and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on **Senate Bill 1164**, authored by Senator Zaffirini. My name is Larry Satterwhite, and I currently serve as the Director of Public Safety and Homeland Security for the City of Houston under Mayor John Whitmire. Prior to this role, I dedicated 34 years to the City of Houston and the Houston Police Department, retiring last year as the Interim Chief of Police.

I am writing today in strong support of SB 1164. This legislation addresses a challenge that cities across Texas face daily: how to compassionately and effectively intervene when individuals experiencing homelessness also suffer from serious mental illness.

Among my responsibilities in my new position is to help lead in the effort to end street homelessness in Houston and Harris County, a primary goal of Mayor Whitmire. This is a deeply personal issue for me. Over the course of my career, I've seen the toll mental illness and substance abuse take on our unhoused population and the people impacted around them to include first responders.

In Houston, we estimate more than 1,000 unhoused individuals on our streets, with over 300 experiencing mental health disorders. Many exist in their own human waste, live in severe distress—some unable to recognize their condition, many vulnerable to predators, at risk of harming themselves or harming others. Tragically, we lose hundreds of these individuals each year.

Law enforcement and first responders are often forced to wait until a crime or crisis occurs before intervention is legally possible. This can be the most dangerous time for our first responders. We want to get them help before the crisis.

SB 1164 provides a critical mechanism for earlier, more effective intervention. It does not aim to criminalize homelessness. Rather, it offers our courts, our judges, and our healthcare professionals greater flexibility to direct longer-term treatment for individuals who are already known to our police, EMS, and healthcare systems. These are individuals who cycle in and out of jails and emergency rooms—without a path to recovery. Today, roughly 30% of the inmates in the Harris County Joint Processing Center suffer from mental illness and many of them are homeless.

Our system lacks sufficient funding, inpatient psychiatric beds, step-down care, reentry, and transitional support to meet the demand. Alongside legislative change, we need investment in treatment infrastructure to ensure individuals can access the care they need—and stay connected to it over time.

This bill is about preventing tragedy—not reacting to it. It makes our communities safer and lifts up everyone. It can and will save lives. I respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Satterwhite".

Larry Satterwhite  
Director of Public Safety and Homeland Security