



# EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

## Testimony to the House Committee on State Affairs on HB 2127 and SB 814

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### **HB 2127 and SB 814 are a step backward for Texans, democracy, and freedom**

Chairman Hunter and Members of the House Committee on State Affairs, I, Luis Figueroa, Chief of Legislative Affairs on behalf of Every Texan (formerly CPPP) oppose HB 2127. In the absence of state action, local jurisdictions across Texas have listened to the needs of their constituents and responded to calls to pass local ordinances that seek to raise standards for working families, provide for the safety of their constituents and innovate to meet the needs of their communities. Cities and municipalities have passed laws that improve economic security and public health such as non-discrimination ordinances, fair chance hiring policies, rest breaks, payday lending limits, and other ordinances.

### **HB 2127 is an attack on local democracy**

State officials should ensure basic protections for Texans across the state but allow locally elected officials to set higher standards as their communities see fit. A Baseline and Associates statewide poll of Texas voters conducted in February 2019 found the following: 87% of Texas voters believe their local elected officials are better connected to their communities and should be allowed to pass policies that reflect their community's needs and values. 83% agreed that local governments pass local ordinances that create strong local economies which contribute to a strong state economy. 82% of Texas voters were bothered that the state legislatures were passing laws that ban all local governments in their state from passing any policies that address economic issues, meaning that local communities are powerless to do anything to regulate business that might help their local economy or protect workers.

### **HB 2127 is an attack on Texas workers**

Current state law prohibits locally elected officials from ensuring businesses pay their employees a living wage by prohibiting a minimum wage above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour or offering paid sick policies. Despite this, local officials continue to work to ensure citizens most likely to be impacted — such as women, and racial and ethnic minorities — have a chance to provide for their families through other basic workplace protections, such as rest breaks for construction workers in blistering Texas heat. This harmful legislation prohibits local jurisdictions from passing or enforcing any policy that offers minimum protections for employees. A few of the critical policies that would be prohibited under HB 2127 include rest breaks, fair chance hiring, pay history discrimination, violet crown acts (protects against hair discrimination), leave policies, fair scheduling, and potentially non-discrimination ordinances.

### **HB 2127 is an attack on safety**

The role of government is to protect citizens. Government upholds laws that protect citizens by prohibiting businesses from polluting our air and water sources as well as preventing the exploitation of



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workers. Businesses contribute to a thriving Texas, and most operate in several jurisdictions. They are routinely required to meet a variety of regulations established by local communities, including varying health code requirements as well as tax rates. HB 2127 guts the ability of cities and counties to protect their residents from everything from festival regulations, to burn bans, to pesticides and dangerous animals.

## **Recommendations**

Rather than banning local governments from ensuring their communities are safe, more equitable, and fair for hard-working Texans, state leaders should be working to pass stronger statewide protections for Texans. These statewide protections should serve as a floor or set of minimum standard protections across the state. Local voters and elected officials should be allowed to expand on protections to reflect the needs and values of their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.