



EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

Testimony to the Senate Business and Commerce on SB 149

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SB 149 is a step backwards for Texans, democracy, and freedom

Chairman Schwertner and Members of the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce, I, Luis Figueroa, Chief of Legislative Affairs on behalf of Every Texan (formerly CPPP) oppose SB 149. 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 which improve economic security and public health such as non-discrimination ordinances, payday lending limits, and other ordinances.

SB 149 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.

SB 149 is an attack on Texas consumers

Local officials work to ensure the safety of Texas residents from being defrauded, exploited, and harmed by bad actors. This harmful legislation prohibits local jurisdictions from passing or enforcing any policy that offers minimum protections for customers and their community. A few of the critical policies that would be prohibited under SB 149 include payday lending protections, firework sales, insurance requirements, and fraud protections.

SB 149 is an attack on safety

The role of government is to protect citizens. Government upholds laws that protect citizens through prohibiting businesses from polluting our air and water sources as well as preventing the exploitation of 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. SB 149 guts the ability of cities and counties to protect their residents from harmful products and practices that could put their safety and health at risk.



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Recommendations

Rather than banning local governments from ensuring their communities are safe, more equitable, and fair for 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.