



## Testimony to House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Against HB 32

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Every Texan believes that social justice requires public policy. Since its founding in 1985, Every Texan has leveraged public policy to expand opportunity and equity for Texans of all backgrounds. Every Texan is a nonprofit organization that researches, analyzes, and advocates for public policies to achieve equitable access to quality health care, food security, education, and good jobs.

One thread that ties together our many policy areas is economic security: we support improving the economic well-being of all Texans. Our state's enviable economy and wealth should ensure that struggling Texas families can still afford a decent home, nutritious food, health care, and education. **We oppose HB 32 because it is a direct threat to the economic security of millions of low-income Texans.**

A downside of our booming economy has been the rise in housing costs. Meanwhile, inflation has hurt everyone, and the cost of living – education, health care, insurance, utilities – continues to rise. To help homeowners and businesses, the Legislature keeps obsessively cutting property taxes. Yet little has been done for the 37% of Texas households who rent. Though we are told the market will provide for them, it simply doesn't.

In this context, the broad, cruel provisions of HB 32 are disturbing. Under the guise of being an "anti-squatter" bill, this bill would further weaken tenant due-process protections and further weaponize the courts in favor of landlords. Shortened eviction timelines are a significant part of the bill, which present huge barriers for tenants defending themselves from eviction. Texas law already heavily favors landlords. This bill tilts the playing field even further.

Another troubling piece of this legislation is the unfunded mandate it puts upon our local governments. Though it would provide no additional funding, the bill would require cities to provide relocation assistance to tenants before any legal assistance.

Every Texan has explored the "tale of two states" that many of us experience. We hear frequently about the "Texas Miracle" and our status as the eighth-largest economy in the world. Our GDP has grown faster than any other state over the past two decades. We have money in the bank and our rainy day fund is full. Yet, state spending on public services is stagnant. More than 40% of Texans live in economic hardship, over 60% of public school children are economically disadvantaged, and we have the highest uninsured rate in the country.

Rather than doing the hard work of dealing with these statewide economic problems, some lawmakers are content simply to use culture-war issues – such as the overblown issue of squatters – to divide and distract us while continuing to privilege the wealthy and powerful. HB 32 continues that shameful and irresponsible practice, and Every Texan strongly opposes it.