

THE STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF FORT BEND §

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ADDRESSING
STATE UNFUNDED MANDATES**

WHEREAS, Fort Bend County is the fifth fastest growing county in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in Fort Bend County, road construction is a large and growing expense because state and federal transportation programs have not kept pace with our rapid population growth in to providing adequate highway construction and maintenance funding; and

WHEREAS, Fort Bend County must conduct state, federal and local elections, register vehicles, assess and collect taxes, and provide legal counsel and pay medical bills for the indigent; and

WHEREAS, Fort Bend County must enforce the laws through its Sheriff's Office, build and operate the jails and support the state's criminal and civil court system; and

WHEREAS, Data integration between jail, court systems, jail medical provider, probation, public defenders and community services is a matter of life and death; and

WHEREAS, Individuals often give a "piece of paper" with bond conditions that include referral/ follow-up with behavioral health services, there is no system to track this or facilitate this linkage; and

WHEREAS, The best way to connect individuals in jail with services needed in an efficient and effective manor, is to use technology to transmit information where needed; and

WHEREAS, The lack of data shared systems and meaningful data keep individual in jail when they need to receive mental health assistance; and

WHEREAS, The use of shared technology will reduce bond revocations, incarcerations, and will improve functioning and self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, In Texas, a juvenile is anyone who is at least 10 years old but is not yet 17 years old, and there has been an ongoing debate around raising the age of being tried as a juvenile to 21, and an increase in age would increase the burden on County Probation & Detention Services; and

WHEREAS, Those in support of raising the age of juveniles to 21 refer to research showing that the human brain does not reach full development and maturity until mid-20s; and

WHEREAS, It is also argued that a juvenile trial would allow lawbreakers to seek rehabilitation rather than being jailed, and there are additional arguments to match the drinking age and the age to purchase tobacco with age of juveniles being treated as adults; and

WHEREAS, Projections show that increasing the age of juveniles to just 19 would increase the population of 17-year-olds in Fort Bend's detention center from 10% to 33% by 2020, thus needing additional funding to meet such mandates; and

WHEREAS, Community supervision and corrections departments have experienced significant revenue and fee loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic while performing major services to provide safe and effective ways for probation please to be taken in Court; and

WHEREAS, Residents of Fort Bend County need broader access to a mental health jail diversion program and crisis stabilization program when entering and leaving jail; and

WHEREAS, Adults with untreated mental health conditions are eight times more likely to be incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, Jails are becoming the largest institutions for people with serious mental illness; and

WHEREAS, It is difficult for jail staff to identify mentally ill residents at intake; and

WHEREAS, Courts are so backlogged with cases residents are staying in jail for longer periods of time; and

WHEREAS, Partnering with the State of Texas to allow Fort Bend County to support a broader jail diversion program to reduce the frequency of arrests, recidivism and incarceration among persons with mental illness could provide short-term residential treatment in a crisis stabilization unit;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS, THAT:

This 7th day of February 2023, the Fort Bend Commissioners Court, meeting as a body in Fort Bend County, Texas:

1. Requests that the State of Texas fund all unfunded mandates, rescind all existing unfunded mandates, and refrain from passing any new and/or additional unfunded mandates.
2. Supports efforts in general to better balance and supplement county funding with state funding in all areas where the State mandates that the County provide services and enforce laws and where the State has limited the ability of counties to fund services through caps; and
3. Supports efforts to provide both the necessary and critical transportation, healthcare and other infrastructure and the associated funding, including maintenance of public education funding as embodied in 86(R) HB 3, for the residents of Fort Bend County; and
4. Supports additional state funding for all parts of our interwoven systems of law enforcement, judiciary and mental health systems, including funding for mental health initiatives, pre-trial programs, CSCDs, and juvenile probation and detention centers in general but specifically if the age is raised to 21.

Adopted by the Fort Bend County Commissioner's Court this 7th day of February, 2023.

By: KP George
KP George

County Judge

By: Vincent Morales
Vincent Morales

Commissioner Pct. 1

By: James "Grady" Prestage
James "Grady" Prestage

Commissioner Pct. 2

By: W. A. "Andy" Meyers
W. A. "Andy" Meyers
Commissioner Pct. 3

By: Dexter L. McCoy
Dexter L. McCoy
Commissioner Pct. 4

ATTEST:

Laura Richard
Laura Richard, County Clerk

