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State Senator Molly Cook Files First Three Bills Ahead of 89th Legislative Session

Austin, TX – Today, Senator Cook (D-Houston) filed the first three bills of the 89th Legislative Session for Senate District 15. During Senator Cook’s first six months in office, the district persevered through the May derecho, Hurricane Beryl, and several smaller storms. Addressing systemic concerns with disaster response in the district remains a top priority. In response, Senator Cook filed **SB 270** – Relating to a study of the costs and benefits of burying distribution power lines in certain metropolitan areas, **SB 271** – Relating to the eligibility of certain retail electric customers for designation as critical care residential customers, and **SB 272** – Relating to electric utility planning and cost recovery for enhancing service reliability for vulnerable customers. Senator Cook offered the following comment on the legislation:

“Following the aftermath of the May Derecho and Hurricane Beryl, the Legislature needs to take a hard look at the systems responsible for keeping the lights on and caring for our most vulnerable neighbors during times of disaster. As an emergency room nurse, I know firsthand that a lack of preparedness and attention to vulnerable populations, like our senior citizens, results in devastating health and safety consequences, both immediately and compounded in the long term.

SB 270 gives us an opportunity to think creatively about the infrastructure of the future by studying the pros and cons of burying powerlines. Other vulnerable states like Florida have undertaken this kind of investment in their infrastructure resiliency. There is significant conversation in and around the Houston region about the possibility of buried infrastructure and the cost, and the industries and people of Texas need an opportunity to look at hard data to determine best next steps.

During Hurricane Beryl, we heard directly from many senior citizens in District 15 trapped in their homes, sometimes for multiple days, due to non-operational elevators. Elders were

isolated with no ability to cool off or obtain needed food and supplies. SB 271 ensures that facilities housing residents who rely on an elevator to access and exit their property receive designation as ‘critical load.’ This designation allows repair operations to prioritize these facilities in times of emergencies, alongside individuals relying on electric-powered medical devices.

Finally, last session, the legislature passed legislation to allow utilities to recover costs associated with strengthening their infrastructure against extreme weather. We want utilities to actually be investing in resiliency and reliability, not just checking a box for their public relations. SB 272 would require the PUC to consider whether a resiliency plan will actually enhance service reliability for vulnerable customers, including elderly and those with disabilities, who we know, are among those most impacted by changing weather patterns.”

In addition to the bills authored by Senator Cook today, Senator Cook joined her Democratic colleagues in filing legislation to support abortion rights, increase access to voting, expand healthcare, and promote reasonable gun restrictions. In the coming months, Senator Cook will author additional legislation grounded in her expertise from the emergency department and the values and ideals of the people of SD 15.

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