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Senator Joan Huffman Seeks to Protect Texans From Repeat Violent Offenders through Bail Reform Legislation

AUSTIN- To protect all Texans, and in response to the outrageous number of serious crimes committed by violent offenders out on bond, Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston) announced today that she is filing comprehensive legislation to reform Texas' bail bonds system.

"As a former prosecutor and criminal district court judge, it is absolutely appalling to see the release of habitual and violent offenders on small, and sometimes multiple, bonds," said Huffman. "This session, I will work with all interested parties to protect the public from a judicial and bail system that is failing them."

While Texas' bail system needs statewide reform, Huffman notes that the increase in crime in Harris County is shining an even brighter light on the need for change.

"The bail system in Harris County is a disaster and making our citizens unsafe," echoed Doug Griffith, President of the Houston Police Officers Union. "Houston Crime Stoppers recently listed 90 men, women, and children who have been killed by suspects in Harris County alone out on multiple felony bonds, PR bonds, and bond forfeitures. We desperately need relief. Just this week we had a deputy shot by a suspect out on 3 felony bonds."

The soon-to-be filed legislation seeks to end the practice of releasing violent offenders on personal bonds, and some offenders on multiple bonds. The bill also calls for increasing the resources judges are required to consider when setting bonds, allowing them to make more educated determinations on bail amounts. Additionally, the bill calls for the establishment of a reporting system to track and monitor bail bonds administered throughout the state. "This new reporting system is intended to increase both transparency and accountability, which is always a good thing in the criminal justice arena," said Huffman.

"It is time for the legislature to require the judicial branch to fulfill its obligation to public safety. Enough is enough."

(Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which includes portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting, Chair of the Senate Committee on Jurisprudence, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, and as a senior member of the Senate Committee on Finance, Administration, and Legislative Budget Board. Huffman and her family reside in Houston.)

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