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To the members of the House Committee on State Affairs. *Via hand delivery.*

March 20, 2019

Re: HB 1877 (Davis), ethics reform, supporting testimony by Public Citizen

Dear Chairman Phelan and members of the committee:

Public Citizen appreciates the opportunity to testify for HB 1877. This bill consists of ethics reform measures that were passed through the House during the 85th legislature and did not receive hearings on the Senate Floor. Public Citizen is supportive of ethics reform because Texas has particularly weak ethics laws. In a 2015 assessment of ethics laws across the nation by the Center for Public Integrity, Texas received a D-.¹ Because Public Citizen supports strengthening our state's ethics laws, we support HB 1877.

Public Citizen does not support section 3 of the bill, which allows corporations or labor organizations to make political contributions. Public Citizen disagrees with this practice and with the court decisions that have legitimized it. However, we understand that this provision enacts current federal law, so we do not oppose HB 1877 due to its inclusion.

The remaining provisions of the bill were all passed through the House in the 85th legislative session. At the time Public Citizen registered in favor of HB 1378, HB 1379, HB 1381, HB 2471, HB 2470, and HB 1377.

Public Citizen did not take a position on HB 1384 during the 85th legislative session and we are not taking a position on that provision in HB 1877 now.

Because each provision of this bill was previously passed by the House in the 85th legislative session, and because these provisions as a whole strengthen Texas ethics law, we support HB 1877.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, if you wish to discuss our position further, I can be reached by email at ashelley@citizen.org or by phone at 512-477-1155.

Respectfully,
Adrian Shelley, Texas Office Director
Public Citizen

CC: Rep. Ana Hernandez, Rep. Joe Deshotel, Rep. R. D. "Bobby" Guerra, Rep. Sam Harless, Rep. Justin Holland, Rep. Todd Hunter, Rep. Phil King, Rep. Tan Parker, Rep. Richard Peña Raymond, Rep. Eddie Rodriguez, Rep. John T. Smithee, Rep. Drew Springer

¹ See <https://publicintegrity.org/accountability/texas-gets-d-grade-in-2015-state-integrity-investigation/>.