



## Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network

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August 22, 2017

Dear Hidalgo County Commissioners,

Thank you for the clear and firm public expression of your concern for the possible consequences of SB4. As the elected leadership of Alamo Tx. moves forward in considering those avenues of action that would seem to best guarantee the public safety of our community, the members of the Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network and its many allies wish to assure you of our support for any action that pushes back against this bill.

Numerous civil rights attorneys, law enforcement officials, city and county elected officials, religious leaders and others from across the state of Texas have expressed their clear and persistent opposition to SB4. These concerns range from the burden of unfunded mandates placed on local entities (the need to train police officers to recognize the more than fifty varieties of visas granting lawful presence, to offer just one example) to the inherent legalization of racial profiling (despite a confusing, ineffective term in SB4 that prohibits such profiling).

Residents of the border are particularly sensitive to the politics that were behind this bill. The undocumented, long-term residents of the region know that their fate is only a fifteen-minute ride from the International Bridge. The family members and friends of the undocumented suffer a quiet, ever present trauma in expectation that these loved ones could be removed at a moment's notice. Unlike other regions in the state, we have already born the weight of a huge law enforcement presence in an increase in Border Patrol and Customs agents, DPS, and National Guard troops.

The Border Region is slowly being changed by federal and state intervention. It is no longer a hospitable bridge between nations, but a place where anxiety about the color of one's skin marks even the youngest of our residents. Already, clinics are marking a deep drop in appointments (for fear of being stopped and asked for papers), and schools began to see a decrease in attendance as the year wound down. This can all be dismissed as the "sacrifice" needed to secure the border, but we residents of the border know that this is not the case, that it is only a new reason to worry about our own security.

This is the state of affairs before the September 1<sup>st</sup> implementation of the law.

Equal Voice believes you would offer our city a powerful service if you would take a clear stand on the side of the well-being of our entire community, joining Cameron County, El Paso County, Maverick

*Our members include:*

ARISE - A Resource in Service Equality (Alamo)  
American Civil Liberties Union of Texas (Brownsville) • MANO a MANO (Brownsville)  
La Unión del Pueblo Entero LUPE (San Juan) • Proyecto Azteca (San Juan)  
Proyecto Juan Diego (Cameron Park/Brownsville)  
South Texas Civil Rights Project (Alamo)

County and Travis County the cities of El Paso, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, Laredo, Houston and El Cenizo and others in opposition to this bill.

While it may be too late to join as plaintiffs in the ongoing legal action against the state, the city can still join as amicus. This does not require any money, legal fees, or economic action as the city is not opting to disregard a state law, but to join in the numerous arguments that the bill is unconstitutional and that the bill's consequences were not properly considered by legislators.

More importantly, you would give your citizens the powerful message that the City of Brownsville refuses to join in what can only be termed as the racist targeting of all immigrants. We look forward to you telling the world that this is not right.

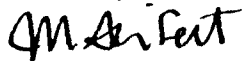
Our own protests and actions against this bill include the following organizations:

The Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network  
Bishop Daniel Flores and other priests  
Iglesia Bautista de Southmost and other pastors  
Dr. Marsha Griffin and other physicians  
Proyecto Juan Diego  
Mano a Mano  
ACLU of Texas  
ARISE  
Texas Freedom Network  
Movimiento del Valle  
Fuerza del Valle  
URGE  
Advocates for Youth  
Planned Parenthood Texas Votes  
LUPE  
South Texas Civil Rights Project

We would add to these organizations the more than 300 individuals who made two trips to Austin to offer personal testimony against the bill.

We appreciate your careful consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Michael Seifert  
Network Weaver  
Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network

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