



May 5, 2019

A broad coalition of organizations representing law enforcement, hospitals, health care professionals, people with disabilities, counties, the judiciary and others urge the Senate to **support House Bill 2048 (as amended)**, by Rep. John Zerwas and sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Joan Huffman (R-Houston). The bill would eliminate the Driver Responsibility Program while continuing critical state funding for all Texas trauma hospitals.

We urge the Senate to pass HB 2048, including essential amendments by Reps. Howard, Krause and Darby, which clarify that county judges can waive fines and fees for indigency; eliminate any uncertainty about the constitutionality of revenue from DUI and DWI penalties going to state general revenue; and provide larger allocations from Account 5111 to the regional advisory councils and EMS.

Since its passage in 2003, the DRP has imposed civil fines and penalties in addition to criminal fines and penalties on reckless and irresponsible drivers and directed some of that revenue to Texas trauma hospitals. Funds from the program have supported the development of an improved trauma infrastructure, an increase in the number and geographic reach of designated trauma hospitals and a trauma mortality rate well below the national average. However, despite its serving as the main source of funding to offset some of Texas trauma hospitals' uncompensated trauma care costs, the DRP has been administratively complex and burdensome for judges, courts and sheriffs and challenging for those subject to its fines and penalties, particularly low-income Texans.

Texas hospitals and other stakeholders long have recognized the program's flaws and have worked to identify other sources of trauma hospital funding in order to reduce reliance on the DRP. HB 2048 would continue to penalize irresponsible drivers, including those convicted of driving while intoxicated, while eliminating administrative complexity for local jurisdictions. Most importantly, funding for Texas trauma hospitals is preserved.

HB 2048 is landmark legislation that could achieve what many organizations and lawmakers have sought for years. It represents an effective compromise and preserves vital funding for Texas trauma hospitals and the patients who need them.

We urge your support for and vote "yes" on HB 2048