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December 12, 2018

Ms. Julie Davis,
Project Manager
Sunset Advisory Commission

Dear Ms. Davis and Commission Members:

Support for Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners.

Some of the oldest Texas State laws regulating the built environment deal with plumbing. In 1897 the Texas Legislature required cities to enact plumbing codes to protect their residents. Later, in the 1930s and 1940s, in an effort to protect the health, safety and welfare of Texans, the Texas Legislature enacted laws to license and regulate Architects, Engineers, and Plumbers statewide.

These specific professions have the greatest impact on public health and safety in the built environment. Two (Architects and Engineers) are primarily in the design phase of construction and the third (plumbing) deals with the actual construction practices. So we ask ourselves why the Legislature only selected plumbers as a regulated construction practitioner. Why not also include electricians and/or general contractors to be licensed and regulated?

Primarily, it is because poor plumbing practices can lead to sickness and/or death due to contaminated water supplies for entire community. Poor construction practices by general contractors or other subcontractors can have devastating effects but generally the impact is limited to one building. Whereas one simple cross connection between the water supply and a contaminant can poison an entire regional water system causing widespread sickness.

Since 1947, the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (TSBPE) has ensured that plumbing professionals have adequate education, experience and practical knowledge of sanitary plumbing practices to prevent catastrophic illnesses and potential disastrous impact to the State of Texas. For these reasons the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners should continue to be a single focused agency that continues to provide a protective umbrella, sheltering the residents of Texas from potential calamitous effects of a dangerously under regulated

construction practice.

As an Association of municipal Building Officials, we are individually licensed and regulated by the State agencies that regulate all the construction trades. This includes, Architects, Engineers, Plumbers, Electricians, Mechanical Contractors and Irrigators. Since our members are not only licensed through these groups but we are also required to enforce State of Texas licensing laws. This gives us a unique perspective in how these agencies work and where they lack the necessary tools to adequately protect the public. It is our opinion that, those trades that have focused State agencies (Architects, Engineers and Plumbers) have superior investigative, enforcement and customer service practices. This opinion is derived from experiencing and viewing the actual field and enforcement work of the TSBPE, TBAE and TBPE and the service provided by TDLR.

It is interesting to note that of all the State agencies that license and regulate practitioners, in the built environment, as well as establish minimum standards by the adoption of model codes only the plumbing and mechanical industries are split between two standards. Having two standards with potential for conflict between the different codes creates confusion for the practitioners as well as the design professionals. The Sunset Commission should, as a part of their recommendation, establish that the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners select one plumbing code as the minimum standard for testing. This plumbing code should work in concert with the other codes adopted by the State of Texas. Only the International series of codes promulgated by the International Code Council can achieve this. It is the only series of codes that has a process for discovering, reviewing, and correcting conflicting code provisions between the codes. Selecting codes that are correlated to ensure uniformity and establish a minimum threshold of life safety is paramount in protecting the residents of Texas.

Overall it is our belief that if TSBPE is sunset or incorporated into another State agency, it will be to the detriment of the health, safety and welfare of all Texans. The Building Officials Association of Texas strongly urges the Sunset Commission to retain the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners as it currently operates to ensure that Texas remains a safe and health place to live, work, shop, worship and learn. Please feel free to contact us should you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Mike Olson

President, Building Officials Association of Texas