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To the members of the Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs.

Via hand delivery.

May 3, 2021

Re: SB 328 by Sen. Lucio, supporting testimony of Public Citizen

Dear Chairman Perry and members of the committee:

Public Citizen appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 328 by Senator Lucio, relating to establishment of the disaster identification system for a declared state of disaster.

Public Citizen has advocated for many years on behalf of communities and their needs during disasters. We have long supported additional methods for public notification and means for emergency responders to identify members of the public in need.

In the Fall of 2017 after Hurricane Harvey, we participated in conversations about disaster and emergency response that including leadership from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Department of Emergency Management. In the midst of the Hurricane Harvey response, TDEM Chief Nim Kidd implored Texans in need of assistance “to make sure you put a signal out there, that you are still there, and you still need help, convey that message to first responders.”

SB 328 creates a standard system to convey that message: an illuminated display that uses a standard color scheme to communicate to first responders the needs of people and domestic animals.

Last week we testified in support of the identical companion to SB 328, HB 671 by Rep. Mando Martinez. Last session Rep. Martinez passed this bill as HB 91 (86R) unanimously through its committee and through the House with a vote of 143-0-2. It was received by the Senate and passed through this committee 7-0. It ran out of time last session before reaching the full Senate.

We support SB 328 because we want first responders to have every available tool to respond to people in need during disasters.

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

CC: Sen. Drew Springer, Sen. Brandon Creighton, Sen. Sarah Eckhardt, Sen. Roland Gutierrez, Sen. Nathan Johnson, Sen. Lois W. Kolkhorst, Sen. Beverly Powell, Sen. Larry Taylor