

2023 Annual Report



Essential Workers Board



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Background

On November 30, 2021, the Commissioners Court approved the creation of the Harris County Essential Workers Board (HCEWB) and charged Harris County's Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity (DEEO) with implementing the Board. The HCEWB will make non-binding recommendations to DEEO and other departments and advise the County on how its policies and programs affect workers' health and rights.

The board comprises 13 members, each appointed for 1-3 year terms. The County Judge and each Commissioner coordinates with the Boards and Commissions Office (HCBCO) to appoint one member each to the HCEWB in accordance with the criteria described in the Bylaws. To be eligible for service on the HCEWB, residents of Harris County must qualify as an essential workers as defined by the Bylaws. Essential Workers are

“categories of workers that Harris County residents depend on for their survival and well-being, defined by the CISA as “workers who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continued critical infrastructure viability” and “workers who support crucial supply chains and enable functions for critical infrastructure.” This includes, but is not limited to, healthcare workers, home care workers, childcare and education workers, domestic workers, grocery and drug store workers, production and food processing workers, farm workers, delivery drivers, warehouse workers, food service workers, hospitality and service workers, public and private transportation workers, janitors and environmental services workers, construction workers, retail workers, and federal, state, and municipal employees.”

Individuals that do not presently qualify as an Essential Worker but have an immediate work history as an LMI Essential Worker also qualify for serving on the Board.

Meet The Board



KARA LEVY

CHAIR, DOMESTIC INDUSTRY

Kara is a loving wife and mother of three beautiful children. Her dedication to her family is unwavering, and she takes pride in instilling values of empathy, kindness, and curiosity in her children. Professionally, Kara is a freelancer and a small business owner in the domestic industry. She has proven her entrepreneurial spirit, with a knack for turning her ideas into successful ventures. In addition to her family and career, Kara finds time to give back to her community. She is a dedicated volunteer, actively involved in community service initiatives. Her commitment to making her community a better place is truly admirable, and she serves as an inspiration to those around her.



MAYNOR ÁLVAREZ

VICE CHAIR, JANITORIAL INDUSTRY

Maynor Alvarez was born in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala where he completed high school. He moved to Houston in 2005 in search of better opportunities to help his family economically. After high school, he studied marketing and took various courses in communication with a focus on radio. In Texas, Maynor entered seminary to study theology, which included various leadership courses. Maynor has been a leader and active member at Workers Defense for more than 5 years. His participation has focused on immigrant worker rights, wage theft, and heat safety. Maynor joined the Harris County Essential Workers Board because he believes that his experience, knowledge, leadership, and strong commitment to his community are critical to bringing solutions and changes to the different industries of essential work.



ANGEL FLORES

SECRETARY, EDUCATION INDUSTRY

Angel was born and raised in Harris County. She spent her formative years in Northeast Harris County and gained a deep appreciation for its rich cultural heritage and dynamic spirit. She attended MacArthur High School in the East Aldine District, where she thrived academically and embraced the values of hard work and perseverance.

Angel pursued higher education at the University of Houston. Embarking on her professional journey as an educator, she immersed herself in various communities across Harris County, imparting knowledge and guidance to students from diverse backgrounds. Angel became involved with the University of Houston Hispanic Alumni Association, contributing to fundraising efforts to support aspiring scholars pursuing their educational aspirations.

Angel pursued a master's degree in School Counseling and Human Development from Lamar University and is dedicated to championing the cause of education and childcare, advocating for inclusive and equitable practices that accommodate the ever-evolving dynamics of our society.

Meet The Board



ESTEFANIA AYALA

MEMBER, GROCERY INDUSTRY

Estefania Ayala is the Vice President of Teloloapan Meat Market and Co-Founder of Telomarket she believes in the power of offering fresh products to the surrounding community. She began her journey in this field when her immigrant parents decided to open a supermarket in north Houston with the idea of offering the community fresh Hispanic products. Estefania attended Regis University where she graduated receiving Alpha Sigma Nu honors. Her biggest achievement has been able to receive the City of Houston Goods and Services Prime Contractor of the Year Award in 2022. Estefania is a dynamic, result-driven entrepreneur.



CÁNDIDO BATIZ ÁLVAREZ

MEMBER, CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Originally from Honduras, Candido has lived in Houston and worked in construction since 2016. He serves on the Essential Workers Board to bring recommendations to the county from workers in the field of construction. Candido is committed to the community both inside and outside of the industry.



RIXI CASTILLO

MEMBER, CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Rixi, born and raised in Santa Barbara, Honduras to Honduran parents, earned a teaching degree after high school. She held various jobs prior to immigrating to Houston, Texas but her most impactful experience was working in industrial coatings for the construction industry. This particular trade led her to her union, where she eventually became the Director of Organizing for her current region.

Being a part of the labor movement inspired new responsibilities that in turn motivated her to become a member of the Essential Workers Board. Rixi is passionate about representing and advocating for construction workers and contributing to positive changes that can ensure all workers are treated with dignity and respect.

Meet The Board



DIONNE DAVIS

MEMBER, HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

Dionne Davis is a Houston native and a devoted mother of three. Professionally, Dionne has dedicated herself to the healthcare field, serving as a patient care technician. Her commitment to helping others in their times of need and her compassionate approach to patient care has made a positive impact on many lives.

Dionne Davis embodies strength, resilience, and a zest for life. Her role as a loving mother, her career in healthcare, and her love for life's simple pleasures are a testament to her remarkable spirit. She continues to inspire those around her with her grace and determination.



MIKE HOLLAND

MEMBER, CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mike Holland is the Chief Operating Officer for Marek Brothers Systems, Inc., an 85 year-old family owned interior finishes specialty contractor, with offices across Texas and in Atlanta, Georgia. Mike is the current Board Chair for the C3/Construction Career Collaborative, and Co-chairs the Construction Sector Council for the Greater Houston Partnership's Upskill Initiative. He also serves on the boards of community non-profits, Covenant House Texas (board chair), and the Foster Family YMCA. Mike has been with Marek for his entire 52 year career in the construction industry. Mike's journey began as a part time warehouse worker with MAREK while in high school/college (two years), transitioned to a stint as a union apprentice carpenter/drywall mechanic (1975-78), then into the office as an estimator/project manager, sales manager, Division President, and Chief Operating Officer.



KENNETH HOSKINS

MEMBER, PUBLIC SERVICE INDUSTRY

Ken is a 5-year City of Houston Supervisor with an extensive background in customer service and Human Resources. Outside of work his passion is music and all things music entertainment. Ken is a trained musician and songwriter who's had the opportunity to do some pretty cool things musically. He values family and faith, and embraces his role as a father. Ken has a heart for people and a heart for community. His goal is to be a voice for those who feel they don't have one, and to advocate for every walk of life.

Meet The Board



MARQUES POWERS
MEMBER, AVIATION INDUSTRY

Marques Powers was born and raised in Houston, Texas and attended University of Houston Downtown. He worked as a supervisor for the city of Houston solid waste department before becoming a team lead for the Unifi wheelchair Aviation Department, where he has been for a year now.



EDUARDO REYNA
MEMBER, CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Eduardo has more than 15 years of healthcare, research, and higher-ed construction safety experience. In his current role as Construction Safety & Risk Manager for The University of Texas Medical Branch, he provides professional construction safety and risk management expertise in support of capital improvement projects. He collaborates with project teams to identify and implement process improvement elements in the safety and risk areas to ensure compliance with regulatory agencies and institutional policies.

Eduardo has a Bachelor of Science in Safety Management from the University of Houston - Downtown and is currently pursuing a Master of Legal Studies in Risk Management from Texas A&M University School of Law.

He is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP), Certified Healthcare Safety Professional (CHSP), and Construction Risk & Insurance Specialist (CRIS) and was recently appointed as President of the Construction Owners Association of America (COAA) Texas Chapter. He has also served on the Safety Committee for the Construction Career Collaborative (C3).

Meet The Board



MERCEDES TAYLOR

MEMBER, AVIATION INDUSTRY

Mercedes is currently a security officer in the TSA area of Hobby Airport, where she has worked for the past 5 years. Prior to Hobby, she worked with at-risk high school students for over 8 years. Helping people has been a lifelong mission. It is a privilege for Mercedes to serve on the Harris County Essential Workers Board to assist employees to be recognized, respected, and honored as vibrant members of our community.



CLAUDIA SOSA

MEMBER, EDUCATION INDUSTRY

Claudia Sosa graduated as a lawyer in Mexico and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Work online at Loyola University of Chicago. She has had the opportunity to work in immigration where she has been able to help people to have legal immigration status in this country. Claudia has been an active member of the Workers Defense Project since 2019, and she belongs to many Committees such as Legislative, Immigration, etc. She currently works with immigrant youth and is honored to belong to the Essential Workers Board, where she has the opportunity to represent workers in the Education industry.

Name	Position	Term	Appt. Date	End Date	Appointed by
Mercedes Taylor	Member	3 Year	5/25/2022	5/31/2025	County Judge Nomination
Kara Levy	Chair	3 Year	5/24/2022	5/31/2025	Pct 1 Nomination
Candido Batiz Alvarez	Member	3 Year	5/24/2022	5/31/2025	Pct 2 Nomination
Mike Holland	Member	3 Year	5/24/2022	5/31/2025	Pct 3 Nomination
Rixi Castillo	Member	3 Year	10/31/2023	10/31/2026	Pct 4 Nomination
Maynor Alvarez	Vice-Chair	1 Year	10/18/2022	10/11/2025	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Angel Flores	Secretary	2 Year	10/18/2022	10/11/2025	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Eduardo Reyna	Member	2 Year	10/18/2022	10/11/2025	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Ken Hoskins	Member	2 Year	10/18/2022	10/11/2025	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Claudia Sosa	Member	2 Year	10/18/2022	10/11/2025	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Estefania Ayala	Member	1 Year	4/4/2023	4/4/2024	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Dionne Davis	Member	1 Year	6/6/2023	6/6/2024	Recommended by the board, approved by CC
Marques Powers	Member	1 Year	8/8/2023	8/8/2024	Recommended by the board, approved by CC

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the Board is to provide feedback and recommendations to the Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity and other appropriate County departments on County programs and policies that recognize and support Essential Workers. The Board may also serve in an advisory capacity to the Commissioners Court on such programs, and policies.

Specifically, the HCEWB will encourage and support the development and implementation of programs and policies that:

- Protect communities, workers, and businesses across Harris County during public health emergencies and other occupational safety and health hazards;
- Support equitable, cooperative, multi-benefit, and worker-led solutions to achieving protections on the job, including fair wages and benefits and occupational safety and health for all Essential Workers; and
- Take into account the needs and priorities of Harris County residents and promote safe and healthy workplaces across Harris County.

Objectives

The HCEWB will work with the DEEO to carry out the following objectives:

- Overall Approach and Planning
 - Provide ongoing evaluation, feedback, and worker expertise on Harris County's overall approach to protecting Essential Workers' Rights.
- Specific Programs and Policies
 - Encourage transparency; evaluate and provide feedback on existing and future development and implementation of programs and policies that address Essential Workers' Rights.
- Essential Worker Insights
 - Share information, insights, and lived experiences of essential work to assist Harris County in generating reports based on mixed-method, participatory action research to (i) identify areas of concern and (ii) advise and develop recommendations to maximize Essential Workers' Rights.
- Civic Engagement
 - Serve as a public forum for the discussion and exploration of Essential Workers' Rights and community engagement efforts.

Bylaws

The Essential Workers Board was created by Court Order and is governed by Bylaws adopted on November 30, 2021. The Bylaws are in English and Spanish on the Essential Workers Board website: <https://ewb.harriscountytexas.gov/Background>.

ORDER OF COMMISSIONERS COURT

Authorizing the creation of the Harris County Essential Workers Board

The Commissioners Court of Harris County, Texas, convened at a meeting of the Court at the Harris County Administration Building in the City of Houston, Texas, on November 30, 2021 with all members present.

A quorum was present. Among other business, the following was transacted:

ORDER ESTABLISHING THE HARRIS COUNTY ESSENTIAL WORKERS BOARD (HCEWB), ADOPTING THE HCEWB BYLAWS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2021, AND DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY (DEEO) TO LAUNCH THE HCEWB AND FACILITATE ITS WORK

Commissioner Garcia introduced an order and made a motion that the same be adopted. Commissioner Ellis seconded the motion for adoption of the order. The motion, carrying with it the adoption of the order, prevailed by the following vote:

Vote of the Court	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Judge Hidalgo	✓	□	□
Comm. Ellis	✓	□	□
Comm. Garcia	✓	□	□
Comm. Ramsey, P.E.	□	✓	□
Comm. Cagle	□	✓	□

The County Judge thereupon announced that the motion had duly and lawfully carried and that the order had been duly and lawfully adopted. The order adopted follows:

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Harris County Essential Workers Board (HCEWB) is hereby established.
2. The HCEWB Bylaws ("Bylaws") of November 30, 2021, are hereby adopted and incorporated by reference and made a part of this order for all intents and purposes as though set out in full word for word.
3. The Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity (DEEO) is directed to oversee and facilitate the activities of the HCEWB in accordance with the Bylaws.
4. The DEEO shall lead the coordination of other County Departments and/or Offices ("Departments") necessary for the HCEWB to meet its purpose and objectives, as outlined in the Bylaws. Departments shall cooperate with requests from DEEO to

Presented to Commissioners Court

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November 30, 2021

Approve: G/E

Board Implementation

- 2021
 - Commissioners Court creation of HCEWB and approval of Bylaws
- 2022
 - Commissioners Court approval of stipend policy
 - Commissioners Court appointment of initial four board members*
 - HCEWB began the recruitment process for the remaining eight vacancies

*Precinct Four did not appoint a board member due to the transitioning of the Commissioner.

January 2023 Board Member Orientation**



Photographed (Left to Right): Kara Levy, Angel Flores, Mercedes Taylor, Maynor Álvarez, Cándido Batiz Álvarez, Eduardo Reyna, Ken Hoskins

**Please note orientation included the initial seven Board Members.

2023 Accomplishments



Seat Vacancies

The board successfully navigated a challenging year with difficulty filling seats, emphasizing the need for proactive recruitment strategies to ensure a diverse and skilled board. One of the first tasks presented to the board was also one that provided one of their most significant challenges: recruiting members to fill the remaining vacant seats. The strict requirements applicants needed to meet added to the hurdle of an already limited applicant pool. Through continued networking and collaboration with the Office of Boards and Commissions, the board made their final recommendation to the Commissioners Court this year.

Precinct Four Appointment

Precinct Four's recommendation was pivotal in filling the last seat, ensuring a complete board for the November meeting. Precinct Four met with DEEO and the Office of Boards and Commissions to gain an understanding of the board and its goals and insight into what industry representation still needed to be added to the membership. The Precinct 4 appointee became the final member of the board and was named in time to be present at the board's last meeting of the year.

Training Initiatives

The board invested in professional development through two crucial training sessions, focusing on the Fair Standards Labor Act and crafting fair policies, contributing to members' knowledge and skills. Board members attended policy training presented by the Justice Management Institute, where they learned practical strategies and received resources for policy review and evaluation. The board has begun meaningfully evaluating aspects of the Harris County Contractor Safety Record Policy.

2023 Accomplishments



Executive Committee Election

Despite limited candidate options, the board established a capable executive committee to lead. Members were required to elect officers to serve on the Executive Committee of the board. After the group determined their nomination process, those interested submitted their names as nominations for positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Nominees had the opportunity to address the board before votes were cast to elect the committee. The three elected officers successfully carried out their duties as outlined in the board's Bylaws.

A Board Member attended a Community Worker Organization meeting hosted by UCLA Labor Occupational Safety & Health Program to connect with groups across the country doing similar work.

Results for America, a national non-profit focused on evidenced-based policymaking for equitable outcomes in delivering equity and job quality-focused fellowships for government leaders and Trailhead Strategies, requested a presentation highlighting the HCEWB.

Board Meetings

On January 25, 2023, the board voted on a general meeting schedule, allowing flexibility and adjustments. All meetings are public, allowing for public comment and hybrid; members can attend in person or virtually, and a Spanish Interpreter is provided. This enables members to balance their personal and professional demands as essential workers.

<https://ewb.harriscountytexas.gov/Meetings>

2024 Goals

In conclusion, while 2023 presented its share of challenges, the board's resilience and commitment set the stage for a dynamic and impactful 2024. By focusing on community engagement, policy development, and sector-specific relationships, we are poised for success in the coming year. Additionally, we've established the following strategic goals:

Hold a Board Town Hall

The board would like to launch a town hall to facilitate a meet-and-greet between board members and essential workers. This initiative aims to foster collaboration, understanding, and synergy within our community.

Conduct Policy Review for FIFA Cup 2026

The board seeks to conduct a comprehensive review of policies across five sectors in anticipation of the FIFA Cup in 2026. The board hopes to play a key role in recommending and implementing policies that align with the event's impact on our community.

Establish Sector Points of Contact

The board aims to establish and designate a point of contact for each sector throughout the county. This initiative will enhance communication and coordination, ensuring that the board remains closely connected with the unique needs and challenges of different sectors.

Contact Us



HCEWB@hctx.net



<https://ewb.harriscountytexas.gov/>

The board is supported by Harris County's Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity. You may alternatively contact DEEO@eeo.hctx.net.

For the board appointment process, you may contact boards.commissions@harriscountytexas.gov.

