



Crime Stoppers of Houston, Inc.  
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(713) 521-4600  
www.crime-stoppers.org

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo  
1001 Preston, Ste 911  
Houston, TX 77002

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Rania Mankarious

November 5, 2020

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Dear Judge Hidalgo,

On Tuesday October 27, 2020, Andy Kahan appeared before Commissioner's Court with the intention of sharing critical data and offering support. We thought the information would be relevant to maintaining public safety while navigating critical changes to felony bail reform. Andy was invited to attend this meeting and in doing so, represented himself, Crime Stoppers of Houston, and the many victims who have been impacted by crime in our area. While issues may align politically for the court, for Andy and our community, public safety is a non-partisan issue.

The data presented by Andy was just that - untainted data from court records. Crime is up, with some residents saying it has never been as bad as it now and 41 percent saying it is getting out of control, <https://www.fox26houston.com/news/some-residents-in-violent-crime-hot-spots-say-theyve-never-seen-crime-so-bad>. More importantly, Andy had information on 66 victims who lost their lives (three of which were pregnant) as a direct result of county's push to continually release defendants including many violent defendants under the notion that bail holds them unfairly. In each case Andy tracked, the victims were killed by a Harris County suspect that:

- was a defendant who had been released on multiple felony bonds; or
- had a bond forfeiture reinstated; or
- had a motion to revoke bond denied; and/or
- was released on a PR Bond.

What should have been an amicable meeting between like-minded community servants, instead represented what we fear is a growing divide between data and agenda. As the CEO of the largest public safety nonprofit in our city, I am concerned.

- Andy presented his findings on the Zoom session but you chose to mute him. Additionally, without given any opportunity to reply, he was labeled an "interested party" with an "axe to grind" who was only sharing data to engage in "fear mongering."

- Unfortunately, as you muted Andy and maligned his intentions, you also dismissed the efforts of our organization, muted the voices of the many victim families Andy was there to represent, and dismissed rising concerns stemming from the very large community we serve.

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- Your motion instead (passed 4 - 1) was to hire "independent academic" Professor Paul Heaton of the University of Pennsylvania for an "independent study" because he "doesn't have an axe to grind." This is a highly concerning move considering Professor Heaton's public position on bail reform appears, based on readings, to already align with your own.

- Even more concerning was the realization that Professor Heaton had no plans to study the nexus between crime rates and the continued release of habitual felony defendants back into the community. Instead, he planned to examine the rate at which defendants returned or did not return to court for hearings. While an important issue, the examination of crime rates and rates of victimization due to the continual release of violent defendants must not be ignored.

- Andy also spoke with Jim Bethke, Director of Justice Administration for Harris County, who agreed the issues raised by Andy merit discussion for the "independent study".

I have the utmost respect for our elected leaders and the offices you each hold. In fact, I was pleased to read your recent email titled: "All Eyes on Harris County." We are proud of the record number of engaged community members; we also are very cognizant of their voices and their concerns regarding crime. Common sense indicates that public safety is at a higher risk when career habitual offenders are continuously released back into the community - our community members see this and they are talking about it.

Both Andy and Crime Stoppers of Houston will remain ready to partner should the public safety of Harris County victims and residents rise to the importance of the comfort and well-being of habitual felony defendants. In the meantime, muted or unmuted, respected or disrespected, we will continue to aggressively work with partners and citizens, law enforcement and victim families, media and colleagues, to ensure the utter most safety of everyone who calls Harris County home.

Regards,

Rania Mankarious  
Chief Executive Officer

CC Commissioner Rodney Ellis  
Commissioner Adrian Garcia  
Commissioner Steve Radack  
Commissioner R. Jack Cagle