

# HAYNES BOONE



June 28, 2022

Mayor Don McLaughlin  
101 E. Main Street  
Uvalde, TX 78801

Dear Mayor McLaughlin:

We are a coalition of local and national media organizations that have sought to inform the public about the horrific tragedy at Robb Elementary School. We share your commitment to ensuring that all the facts about this incident come to light. We also share the concerns you recently expressed regarding the limited information that has emerged so far, and your desire to present the public with a more comprehensive portrait of the events on that day. In many ways, this is entirely within the City's control.

We write to make you aware of provisions in the law that allow you and other City of Uvalde officials to release additional information to the public. The Texas Public Information Act does not require City officials to await the conclusion of any state or federal investigation in order to make information public. And, as you know, the members of the Uvalde community are crying out to know what happened that day and to have complete transparency and accountability sooner rather than later. In the words of Berlinda Irene Arreola, the grandmother of 10-year-old victim Amerie Jo Garza: "We need to get down to the bottom of everything that has happened and find out the truth."

The sections of the TPIA invoked by the City (552.103, 552.108), and other provisions of the Public Information Act, simply *do not mandate* withholding of information about the events that transpired that fateful day at Robb Elementary. While some of these provisions may *allow* the City to temporarily withhold certain information from the public, the Act does not *require* the City to do so in direct contravention to the demands of the community.

Similarly, the Texas Occupations Code, which governs the release of law enforcement body camera footage, does not require an agency to withhold those recordings during the course of an investigation. Section 1701.660(b) of the Occupations Code specifically states that a law enforcement agency "may release to the public a [body camera] recording . . . if the law enforcement agency determines that the release furthers a law enforcement purpose." And, in fact, recognizing the rights and needs of the public to know, such disclosure has been made during investigations throughout the state. Recently, the Austin Police Department, the Houston Police Department, the La Marque Police Department and the Galveston County Sheriff's Office, among many others, have released body camera footage of critical incidents, even as those incidents were being investigated. In fact, law enforcement agencies across Texas routinely release body camera footage of officer-involved shootings and other critical incidents as a matter of policy – often within 10 days or 30 days – during ongoing investigations.

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Texas law clearly gives the City of Uvalde, the Uvalde Police Department, the Uvalde County Sheriff's Office, and the Uvalde County and District Attorneys the discretion to release broad swaths of information to the public now rather than waiting an indefinite amount of time for the closure of an investigation involving a shooter who is already dead. Many police and prosecutors across Texas routinely release such information.

We join you in calling for a full accounting of the tragic events at Robb Elementary. The victims and their families deserve an accurate and complete picture about what occurred that day. We hope that this letter assists you in evaluating the needs of your community during this difficult time and prompts immediate disclosure of information requested and needed for a community to heal.

Sincerely,

Laura Prather  
On behalf of:

**ABC News**

KTRK – Houston

**Associated Press**

**CBS News**

**CBS Stations Group of Texas**

KTVT – Dallas

**CNN**

**Cox Media Group**

**Dallas Morning News**

**Gannett**

Austin American-Statesman

The Abilene Reporter-News

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

The El Paso Times

San Angelo Standard-Times

Times Record News – Wichita Falls

Amarillo Globe-News

Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

USA Today

**Graham Media**

KSAT – San Antonio

KPRC – Houston

**Gray Television**

KXII – Sherman

KGNS – Laredo

KFDA – Amarillo

KWTX – Waco

**Hearst Newspapers**

Houston Chronicle

San Antonio Express-News

**NBC News**

**New York Times**

**ProPublica**

**Scripps**

**Sinclair Broadcast Group**

KABB/WOAI – San Antonio

KVII – Amarillo

KDBC/KFOX – El Paso

KEYE – Austin

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KBTV/KFDM – Beaumont  
KTXS – Abilene

## **TEGNA**

WFAA – Dallas  
KHOU – Houston  
KENS – San Antonio  
KVUE – Austin  
KAGS – Bryan/College Station  
KCEN – Waco  
KYTX – Tyler  
KIII – Corpus Christi  
KWES – Midland/Odessa  
KBMT – Beaumont  
KIDY/KXVA – San Angelo

## **TelevisaUnivision**

KUVN – Dallas  
KXLN – Houston  
KAKW – Austin  
KWEX – San Antonio

## **Texas Tribune**

## **Wall Street Journal**