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March 24, 2020

The Honorable Renee Couch
2020 President, Texas Association of Counties

Dear Treasurer Couch,

On behalf of our more than 125,000 members across the state, Texas REALTORS® would like to thank you for your efforts, and those of your colleagues in counties throughout Texas, during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to matters of health and safety, our Association is concerned about the impacts the pandemic will have on Texans who are in the process of buying, selling, and leasing homes and other property. This public health crisis could result in the devastation of the real estate market, which in turn would have serious and long-lasting impacts on our local and state economies.

In the event any county in Texas should determine it is in the best interest of the local communities to issue a "Shelter in Place" or similar order, we hope to minimize interruptions within the real estate industry by respectfully requesting that real estate-related services should be considered as essential under those emergency orders. We are especially focused on county clerk services needed to transfer and record property ownership, but also services related to permitting, inspections, construction, and provision of information related to title searches.

As Texas counties and cities have issued emergency orders in recent days, it has not been explicit which, if any, aspects of the real estate industry and related services may continue to function. We respectfully ask that county leaders consider adopting specific language that ensures real estate transactions can proceed and close successfully, such as that which was adopted by the State of Oregon:

- *Services related to real estate transactions including, but not limited to, title searches, appraisals, permitting, inspections, construction, moving, and the recordation, legal, financial and other services necessary to complete the transfer of real property are deemed essential.*

REALTORS® throughout Texas have eagerly implemented technology to hold meetings, share documents, show property, and conduct negotiations and closings virtually. However, those innovations will be for naught if other services necessary to real estate transactions, such as deed recordation, become unavailable.

There remains no doubt the Coronavirus pandemic will disrupt the lives of Texans, but some impacts that would be substantial may be lessened if essential real estate services can be continued. It has been said that "housing is health care." It is vital to our communities that our residents can continue to buy, sell and maintain their housing during this challenging time.

Texas REALTORS® stands ready as a partner to our county leaders, and we are eager to work together to protect our members, their clients, and all of Texas during this crisis. Thank you for your consideration.

Cindi Bulla
2020 Chairman of the Board
Texas REALTORS®

Travis Kessler
Chief Executive Officer
Texas REALTORS®