



February 2, 2026

Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members,

As public servants, the members of AFSCME Local 1624 are committed to delivering the highest quality of services to our community. We recognize this is a shared value with the City Council, **but our membership has strong concerns about the intent, impact, and timeline of the proposed ordinance establishing a citywide Comprehensive Efficiency Assessment.**

During Prop Q, we knocked on over 30,000 doors across Austin and spoke with countless neighborhood associations, political clubs, nonprofit organizations, community leaders, and everyday people. While we acknowledge the fact that the voters expressed a strong desire for the City to lessen the financial burden on their families, we also heard diverse and overwhelming support for the City and its workforce. The public does not want the city's services to suffer, especially when it comes to critical infrastructure, public assets, community programs, and social services. This rally behind public-sector workers has only grown stronger in light of the federal efforts to dismantle critical government functions over the past year.

**We are writing this letter to call on the Austin City Council to operate at the speed of trust.** Like many in the community, we were surprised that the proposed ordinance was posted for Council action so quickly. Any major restructuring efforts should not be done on a fast track or behind closed doors. In order for our workforce and the public to fairly evaluate this proposed ordinance and determine if it can bring both stability to the City's budget and increase effectiveness in service delivery, we outline several key questions that must be answered before this vote takes place. If these questions cannot be sufficiently addressed by the expected vote this Thursday, February 5, we will call on the Council to postpone this vote.

### **Concerns About Process**

A common sentiment expressed by Council after the November 2025 election was that our elected leadership needed to trust the voters. However, trust requires transparency, and we believe this rushed timeline will lead to undesirable outcomes and undermine the City's efforts to build trust.

- A recent Council vote established a consultation agreement with AFSCME Local 1624. Why is this ordinance being proposed in advance of the implementation of this agreement?
- Why is Council being asked to authorize this ordinance before workers, unions, or frontline departments have been meaningfully consulted?
- What guarantees does this ordinance give to the public that the scope of the third-party assessment will be directly shaped and informed by the community, and will reflect the will of the voters to maintain existing services while addressing their financial burden?



### **Concerns About Contextual Assumptions of the Ordinance**

We believe an ordinance defining this work may be preferable to the ballot initiative currently proposed. We also see a serious risk that this ordinance's assessment, without additional engagement and meaningful public commitments about its scope and intent, will produce the same harmful outcomes.

- In 2018, Proposition K attempted to require an external audit and was soundly rejected by voters. If this ordinance passes, it preempts a petition process and possible election, but does not prevent one. What will be done if this ordinance and the Save Austin Now ballot initiative are both successful?
- Does Council feel confident that a supermajority vote is the appropriate threshold to allow us to uncommit the City from continuing funding for future assessments?
- Is the Council confident this ordinance will sufficiently address the interests and goals of a minority of Austin's electorate who may be otherwise inclined to vote for a ballot initiative?
- Are Council Members, in their personal capacity, aware of a broader strategy to address a ballot initiative, and how this ordinance fits into that strategy?
- If voters reject a third-party audit in a ballot initiative, as they did in 2018, will the Council publicly commit to honoring that decision, trusting the voters, and revoke the ordinance by supermajority vote?

### **Concerns About Cost and ROI Assumptions**

The strategic use of our limited taxpayer dollars is critical to ensure every dollar is a sound investment that meets our community's needs. The public has yet to receive concrete cost and return-on-investment (ROI) estimates for this approach. As past and current consultant contracts show, engagements with high-end consultants can incur millions of dollars in both one-time and ongoing expenses. For example, a contract with Gartner, Inc. was approved for \$17M for a single restructuring effort (IT centralization).

- What is the estimated cost (both one-time and ongoing) of a third-party consultant?
- How many frontline workers, support services, or departmental priorities could be funded with that estimated cost?
- What is the anticipated ROI of this assessment?
- What assumptions about potential savings avenues are informing this ROI?
- How will this contract be designated? Will that designation secure regular public reporting, transparency, and a clear scope of work provided to the public?



### **Concerns About Third-Party Motive**

As noted earlier, AFSCME fully supports efforts to make the City more efficient. However, hiring an outside corporate firm to conduct a backroom analysis of city operations is raising concerns among many Austinites, including AFSCME. A common conclusion among these external, third-party consultants is that public service mirrors private-sector approaches to efficiency. This often signals a predetermination toward austerity, layoffs, and the privatization of services and programs.

- Will the ordinance or subsequent agreement with a third-party consultant permit recommendations for privatization, including but not limited to our publicly-owned utilities, social services, parks, pools, libraries, community priorities, or other assets?
- Will automation of positions or duties be permitted as a possible scope of third-party recommendations?
- Will Council guarantee that no layoffs, outsourcing, or privatization proposals can be advanced based on the assessment's recommendations?
- Is the Council prepared to fund and implement “Just Transition” policies for workers facing restructuring and/or termination due to assessment recommendations, including but not limited to training and professional development into new roles?
- Will the goals and definitions of the assessment’s scope of work (e.g., “efficiency”) be informed by Council and public input, and publicized before finalization?
- The City spent \$143M in overtime last year, with one public safety department responsible for nearly \$53M. The ordinance currently states that it applies to all City departments. Will the Council publicly commit that any efficiency assessments shall include **all facets** of City operations and services, including APD?
- Will the scope of work provide a structural risk assessment to operational, regulatory, and workforce risks on the implementation of each recommendation?

### **Concerns About Transparency & Accountability**

Many of our members are aware of systemic inefficiencies and are ready to provide innovative suggestions and constructive input on improvements that reduce costs and improve efficiency. While we have confidence in the City Auditor’s Office to produce a deliverable that incorporates City employees' voices and expertise, third-party consultants will produce the requested deliverables. City staff and the public should be guaranteed opportunities to review and advise on those deliverables. A recent experience highlights this need. In Manager Broadnax’s current IT restructuring effort, the CMO refused to release the “Gartner Report” (which was intended to justify the need for IT centralization) to ACMs, Directors, rank-and-file City staff, or the public. This report was released only after the Texas AG’s Office required its release in response to a



formal public information request. This raises serious concerns about our City leadership's commitment to collaboration and transparency.

- Will AFSCME be granted co-design opportunities for the contract's scope of work?
- Will the contract, scope of work, and amendments be posted publicly?
- Will the datasets used in the analysis be public?
- Will Council hold public hearings on any interim findings and commit to weighing public input and AFSCME engagement on equal footing with corporate consultants?
- Can AFSCME or impacted departments contest inaccuracies before recommendations are finalized?
- Will the draft findings go through a review process, including consultation with AFSCME Local 1624?
- Will there be a Council vote to finalize the consultant's work plan?
- Will the Council commit to voting again before implementing any restructuring guided by this assessment?

City workers understand that we must all adapt to the fiscal constraints we are facing. Our members remain committed to working in a partnership with the City Manager and Council to achieve the goals we all share. But we have serious concerns that our City is planning to restructure public programs, operations, and services without consulting the public. The two options proposed to assess the City's operations and identify areas for improvement are a current petition for a ballot measure and this ordinance. We may view the proposed ordinance differently if the above questions are answered sufficiently, but as it stands, our members see large risks and no rewards in either approach.

**As the voice of the City's workforce, AFSCME Local 1624 is uniquely situated to uplift the expertise of workers who are closest to the operations we want to improve and find the efficiencies we need.** Our City and its Council have a long and recognized history of engaging its workforce and the public on critical issues, and our City is at its best when decisions are made alongside its residents. We look forward to beginning that work under the new consultation agreement framework and to improving how this ordinance delivers for our community. The impacts of this assessment are critical to get right. We ask that you consider the outcomes of this proposed solution and grant City employees and the public the time needed to understand its intent and impact before proceeding with this vote.

In solidarity,

Brydan Summers  
President

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Business Manager

*AFSCME Local 1624 proudly represents over 4,800 City of Austin and Travis County Employees*

**American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO**

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