

December 15, 2020

Dear Mr. Allison:

We are writing to request that you end your campaign to transform Austin into a “strong mayor” city. Collectively, we are community groups and labor unions that serve working people and underserved families in Austin.

We appreciate your efforts to expand the electorate and increase participation in our local elections. However, after carefully reviewing your proposal it is clear that the “strong mayor” component of your proposed charter amendment would dismantle the 10-1 system and result in an unrepresentative and unhealthy consolidation of power within the Office of the Mayor at the direct expense of democratically-elected members of Austin City Council who represent distinct districts.

While there is much left to do to make Austin a better, more equitable place to live, there is no question that the Mayor and Austin City Council under 10-1 have produced significant, tangible results on behalf of Austin residents. The city has made significant strides to address our affordability crisis, promote dignity and respect for workers, expand public transit, reduce the harmful impacts of criminalization on marginalized communities, enhance EMS and the alternatives to police available for people in crisis, mitigate the economic shock of the COVID crisis, fight back against systemic racism across our city, and help save our planet from the devastating impacts of climate change.

If passed, your amendment would reward these efforts and hard-earned results by hollowing out the Council's power and transferring it to a single, unknown person in 2022. We are unconvinced that a strong mayor, armed with newly gained powers over the Council, is somehow better positioned to be sensitive and responsive to the nuanced challenges faced by residents in individual districts than the current system affords, or that the system proposed would have produced the achievements that the 10-1 council has.

We urge you to reconsider the consequences that your campaign could have on the progress made under 10-1 to improve the lives of Austinites.

Mr. Allison: on behalf of our members and the communities we serve, please reconsider your position and end your “strong mayor” campaign.

Sincerely,

Carol Guthrie, AFSCME Local 1624

Willy Gonzalez, UNITE HERE Local 23

Jeremy Hendricks, Southwest Laborers' District Council and LIUNA Local 1095

Selena Xie, President Austin EMS Association, Member of Austinites for Progressive Reform Steering Committee

Emily Timm, Co-Executive Director Workers Defense Action Fund

Chap Thornton, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 286

Kathy Mitchell, police accountability advocate and member of the Reimagine Public Safety Task Force

Central Texas Building and Construction Trades Council

Emily Gerrick, criminal reform advocate and member of the Reimagine Public Safety Task Force

Amanda Woog, criminal reform advocate

Robin Schneider, environmental advocate

Ben Brenneman, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 520

Chris Harris, Reimagine Public Safety Task Force member

United Professional Organizers, Central Texas

Bob Batalan, Community Advocate