



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RELEASE: City Poised to Finally Implement Prop A**

More improvements to come as Council digests Attorney General decision

**Austin, TX** – Yesterday, after hours of delay and two executive sessions thwarted the participation of most of the 100 people that signed up to speak, City Council voted to pass Item 99 and direct the City Manager to update the rules governing the Office of Police Oversight (OPO) in order to end his blatant noncompliance with May's voter-approved Prop A.

“With a 10-1 vote, Council and the Mayor directed the City Manager to finally create the independent fact finding processes required by Prop A,” said Alycia Castillo, Board Secretary at Equity Action. “Effective civilian oversight relies on non-police being empowered to make sure that all the cases deserving of an investigation receive one, and that meaningful, thorough investigations occur.”

Furthermore, immediately prior to Council's consideration of Item 99, the Mayor revealed from the dias that a new opinion by Attorney General Ken Paxton's Open Records Division required additional future action related to police transparency. The subsequent publication of this opinion affirmed that the City of Austin no longer maintains a “g-file.”

“Equity Action has long argued that Texas cities can and should use their discretion to close their g-files because they impede police oversight and transparency, but the full context in this case

must be understood," said Rebecca Webber, Board Treasurer of Equity Action. "While closing the g-file represents an increase in transparency for Austin police, it also just applies the same standards for the public release of records that already exist at DPS, at the Travis County Sheriff, and at hundreds of other Texas law enforcement agencies. None of these agencies suffer from an excess of transparency."

"Prop A was a carefully crafted and measured effort to create independent fact finding and very specific transparency improvements in the ordinance, so notably, there is nothing in Prop A that would mandate the release of records related to an ongoing investigation of an officer," said Kathy Mitchell, Senior Advisor with Equity Action. "Exceptions preventing release of these types of records exist, and the City even has boilerplate language it routinely uses, but the City failed to cite them in the case in question, and that's entirely on them."

We would like to thank Councilmember Qadri for his leadership on Item 99, his co-sponsors, Councilmembers Vela, Fuentes, Velásquez, Harper-Madison, Ryan Alter, and the Councilmembers who voted in support.

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