

June 20, 2018

Honorable Mayor Steve Adler  
City of Austin  
301 West Second Street  
Austin, TX 78701



**RE: June 28, 2018 City Council agenda item #32 – Aggressive Solicitation Ordinance**

Mayor Adler,

The Downtown Austin Alliance opposes adoption of the amended Solicitation Ordinance as drafted. We request that the City conduct a thorough, open, community input process with results that are then vetted by the appropriate City boards and commissions for recommendations to City Council.

It is currently legal to ask people for money in Austin. Despite the current restrictions that attempt to mitigate harassment and intimidation, aggressive solicitation is so pervasive that employees, residents and visitors are confronted daily and sometimes assaulted for refusing to give money to solicitors. Many visitors and convention groups cite this as the reason they will never return to Austin. With the proposed amendments, it will no longer be a violation of the ordinance to block a person's passage, follow someone, ask repeatedly after being refused, or even scream at or make physical contact with a person when soliciting. We believe that amending the ordinance as drafted will exacerbate a very serious problem.

In his May 18, 2018 memorandum to City Council, the City Manager laid out a process that called for the ordinance to be open for review and public input at the June 4, 2018 Public Safety Commission meeting. This did not occur, and the draft ordinance was not made available to the public or to any City Commission for input, discussion or proper vetting before being posted for Council action.

Aggressive solicitation is a serious public safety issue. The potential negative impacts of adopting this proposed ordinance must be given thoughtful consideration. Such action will erode public safety, expose the public to unreasonable harassment and undermine the economic sector that has been targeted to generate funding to address homelessness throughout the city.

Again, it is already legal for a person to ask another for money. We ask that you carefully consider the protection of those who live, work and visit downtown from intimidating and aggressive forms of solicitation, while also protecting the Constitutional right to free speech.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dewitt Peart".

Dewitt Peart  
President and CEO

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager