

Recommendation to amend Austin City Code Chapter 2-1-206 to include Austin Travis County Public Health Commission on the Joint Sustainability Committee

WHEREAS, degraded air quality from climate-related factors like increased particulate matter, ground-level ozone and wildfire smoke is linked to higher rates of respiratory illnesses including asthma and lung cancer, a leading cause of death in Travis County; and

WHEREAS, heightened temperatures and recurrent heatwaves in Austin have escalated the risk of heat-related illnesses, particularly impacting vulnerable populations, including elderly residents, children, and the unhoused population; and

WHEREAS, erratic weather patterns, including more extreme winter storms and thunderstorms, have posed challenges to healthcare services, caused infrastructure damage, and raised the potential for injuries, impacting the health and safety of Austin's residents; and

WHEREAS, low-income communities and communities of color are the most impacted by extreme weather and pollution, leading to unjust quality of life outcomes and health disparities; and

WHEREAS, according to the World Health Organization, “By 2030, climate change is projected to cause an additional 250,000 deaths per year, with mental health disorders accounting for a significant portion due to increased stress, anxiety, and trauma from climate-related events”; and

WHEREAS, City Code directs the Joint Sustainability Committee to “promote close cooperation between the council, City management, City boards, commissions, committees, and task forces... with the goal of coordinating all similar activities within the City and the community in order to secure the greatest public benefit;”

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Joint Sustainability Committee of the City of Austin hereby recommends that City Code Chapter 2-1-206 and the bylaws of the Joint Sustainability Committee be amended to add the Austin Travis County Public Health Commission to the membership of the Joint Sustainability Committee to foster collaboration and address the critical intersection of climate change and public health for the betterment of the Austin community.