



January 29, 2024

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

We are writing to express our support for item 2 posted on the agenda for February 1, 2024. In our work with City of Austin employees at the Austin Animal Center, we have been made aware of the excessive physical danger and challenges to morale posed by the overpopulation of aggressive animals in the City's custody. Considering the shortages of mid- and entry-level staff throughout the Animal Services Office, existing staff face an undue burden when dealing with a disproportionate number of animals that require extreme caution to safely handle.

We support the ordinance changes which permit the City to make standard veterinary care decisions about animals who have caused serious injury to previous victims. Employees at the Center have experienced severe bites on too many occasions, and the changes in item 2 will protect animal care staff, animal protection officers, and all other workers who participate in animal handling. Increased safety and decreased workload will assist in the recruitment and retention of additional employees, which will have an outsized positive effect on the conditions of both the animals at the Center and the people who spend their careers caring for them.

While we support item 2, we would like to make it known that compensation adjustments are also needed to address staffing shortages and increased workloads for our staff at Animal Services. We hope to see additional compensation measures in place and will continue to advocate until our staff are fairly compensated.

We ask that you support item 2 so Austin Animal Center employees can perform their duties safely, humanely, and with sufficient support from the City of Austin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carol Guthrie".

Carol Guthrie
Business Manager, AFSCME 1624