



City of Austin

Founded by Congress, Republic of Texas, 1839

Watershed Protection Department

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767

April 19, 2023

Honorable Chair and Members of the House Land and Resource Committee,

Chair Burns and Committee members, my name is Jorge Morales, and I am the Director of the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department. I am providing written testimony on behalf of the City of Austin against HB 5217. Austin is opposed to hb 5217 because it would allow areas in the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) to be released from the ETJ into unincorporated areas of the county that do not have equivalent regulations needed to preserve water quality and could potentially negate Austin's ability to comply with federally mandated permits and could cause Austin to be fined millions of dollars based on precedent from other cities in Texas.

The regulation of impervious cover in the ETJ is an important tool to preserve regional water quality. Runoff from impervious surfaces includes parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, roads, and roofs. In urbanized areas with a lot of paved surfaces, storm water must run off into storm sewers, where it is carried directly to streams. Before the water reaches streams, it picks up contaminants like fertilizers, debris, bacteria, and petroleum byproducts. Regulating impervious cover contributes to protecting water quality and preserves economically important natural features such as Barton Springs, Lake Austin, and Lady Bird Lake, which draw thousands of visitors to Austin each year. Barton Springs is a vital recreational asset hosting nearly a million swimmers per year. Recreation on the lakes in the Austin area supports many businesses and events that are important to Austin's economy. Degradation of regional water quality could potentially limit both the recreational and economic benefits provided by these bodies of water.

Because HB 5217 would allow landowners to disannex from the ETJ jurisdiction without justification and without equivalent levels of environmental protection for regional water quality and which could endanger compliance with mandated water quality permits, we respectfully oppose HB 5217.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jorge Morales, , P.E., CFM

Director

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