



# City of Austin

Founded by Congress, Republic of Texas, 1839  
Watershed Protection Department  
P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767

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April 3, 2023

Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Local Government,

Chair Bettencourt and Committee members, my name is Katie Coyne. I am the Environmental Officer for the City of Austin and Assistant Director of the Watershed Protection Department. I am providing written testimony on behalf of the City of Austin, against SB 2038. Austin is opposed to SB 2038 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 county regulations needed to preserve our water quality for recreation and drinking.

The regulation of impervious cover in the ETJ is an important tool to preserve regional water quality for recreation and drinking. Impervious surfaces include parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, roads, and roofs. Regulating impervious cover contributes to protecting the quality of our drinking water by helping to manage water treatment costs and water quality risks and preserving economically important natural features such as Barton Springs, Lake Austin, and Lady Bird Lake, which are critical to Austin's economy.

In areas neighboring Austin, approximately 60,000 Texans rely on clean groundwater from the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer for their drinking water. 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. In addition, Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer provide habitat for federally listed endangered species and sustain the iconic recreation at Barton Springs pool.

Travis County does not have the same protective Barton Springs Zone regulations, including the requirement for non-degradation water quality treatment. Additionally, in the areas draining to Lake Austin and Lake Travis, Austin's primary drinking water supply reservoir, there are no County impervious cover limits unless over the aquifer. Without effective regulation of impervious cover, the costs for water treatment could increase. Covering soil with impervious material could increase the cost of treating groundwater and raw surface water. This is because runoff from impervious surfaces contains much more pollutants, sediment, and bacteria.

Because SB 2038 would allow landowners to disannex from the ETJ jurisdiction without justification and without equivalent levels of environmental protection for regional water quality to be provided by the county, we respectfully oppose SB 2038.

*The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.  
Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request.*



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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katie Coyne  
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Assistant Director, Watershed Protection Department  
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