

ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

RE: Council File: 22-1196 - Charter Reform Ballot Initiative / Los Angeles 2024 /Population Growth / Major Immigrant Destination / Los Angeles City Council Seats / City Residents Representation

Position: SUPPORT, BUT ALSO REQUESTS AN AMENDMENT

Arleta NC strongly supports this motion to have the Chief Legislative Analyst and City Administrative Officer report back on a charter amendment to expand the City Council. It is simply not possible for 15 council members to govern 4 million people. Each City Council person is supposed to represent over a quarter million residents. For comparison, in New York City (8.4 million people, 51 council districts), each council district represents approximately 160,000-170,000 people. In Chicago (2.71 million people, 50 wards), each alderman represents approximately 54,000 people. Locally, cities like Burbank, Santa Monica, Glendale, San Fernando, West Hollywood, and Santa Clarita all have a minimum of 5 council members – despite each one having less people than a single Los Angeles City Council district. In fact the combined populations of Burbank, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and San Fernando are roughly equal to one Los Angeles Council District – but this population is served by 22 council members.

The oversized City Council districts have created an environment rife with opportunity for corruption and citizen disengagement. Three council members have been indicted in the last 2 years; three more have been recorded trading favors and gerrymandering districts to consolidate their power. Adoption of this motion would give voters the opportunity to create smaller districts that more accurately reflect the communities they represent; it would also help blunt the political and racial gerrymandering that took place behind closed doors in 2021. By doubling the size of city council representation to 30 more districts would create more opportunities for underserved communities to have a voice on the Council rather than being traded around like assets to embed politicians in positions of power. This is a vital step towards fixing the rot in City Hall. The Council must move this forward as expeditiously as possible.

Furthermore, the same ballot measure for charter reform **must also slash in half the annual salary of council members** to go from roughly \$224,000 to \$112,000, just as City Attorney Mike Feuer proposed at the time of redistricting in the City of Los Angeles.¹

The public's faith in the City Council has been overthrown due to the content of the audio leak where three council members were disparaging not only the people they represent but in particular a sitting council member's infant child.² Aside from the full resignation of the remaining two council members that participated in disgraceful language unbecoming of elected officers, Gil Cedillo and Kevin de Leon, these two major reforms will be some of the real tangible steps towards rebuilding trust in Angeleno households and better representation for the taxpayers of each of the council districts.

Given the preponderance of the evidence the Arleta Neighborhood Council strongly supports Council File Motion 22-1196 to increase the number of representatives with the amendment to slash council member salaries in half as well.

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-09-20/city-atty-mike-feuer-wants-to-double-the-size-of-the-city-council-pay-each-member-less>

² <https://www.latimes.com/california/00000183-bed2-d88f-abb7-bfd707470000-123>