

Dear Texas House Members,

We are writing to express our concern for the negative impact that HB 2 will have on something central to the quality of life of all Texans - our public parks. In exchange for negligible property tax relief for homeowners, municipalities will face a budgetary crisis that will cause an outsized negative impact towards their ability to provide services central to residents' quality of life. This includes devastating cuts to parks budgets, limiting the ability of these governmental entities to properly maintain and operate public parks and reducing the ability of the public to access quality green spaces.

Public parks, trails and green space are central to the quality of life for all Texans, whether they live in cities, suburbs, or rural areas. They provide benefits far beyond their environmental and ecological contributions. They are places where anyone, regardless of race and class, can find opportunities for recreation and exercise critical to a healthy lifestyle. Active parks contribute to safer neighborhoods, and provide an economic boost to the surrounding area. They are one of the last public and democratic spaces left in our communities, places where we are all able to gather, meet one another, and create and cultivate community.

There is widespread bipartisan support for our cities, counties, and towns to offer well-maintained public parks to their residents. Even in good economic times without the tax caps under consideration, municipalities have faced large budget gaps in providing proper maintenance, operations and programming in their parks systems. *(Should be edited if coming from private citizen) Non-profits like ourselves work hard every day to raise private dollars in order to fill gaps between what governmental entities are able to provide and what the public expects and deserves. We are concerned that should the gap grow due to the effect of HB 2, it may be beyond our ability to address.*

*(Personalize your letter with something specific to your municipality and how it would be affected by tax caps. The following is what APF will be using) In Austin, it is estimated that HB 2 would cause an annual budget deficit of \$51.7 million in three years while the typical Austin homeowner would save only \$2.70 per month. That deficit equals more than half of the Parks and Recreation Department's annual budget. \$2.70 a month is far too negligible of a savings to justify draconian cuts to the parks budget and other municipal services. Even a different cap, such as the 3.5% passed out of the Senate in SB 2, would equal an annual budget deficit of more than \$35 million in Austin, more than a third of our annual parks budget. Reducing the ability of municipalities to fund services through the caps proposed in HB 2 won't just result in the disappearance or severe reduction of these services through a thousand cuts - it will be an arrow to the heart of what brings value, meaning and enjoyment to our lives.*

We urge you to oppose HB 2, and to work with your colleagues to determine a way to reduce property taxes without doing so on the backs of what is essential to the quality of life for all.

Sincerely,