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IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday February 28, 2023

## **RELEASE: Huge Coalition says “Yes on A, No on B!” in May**

**Austin, TX** -- Equity Action formally launched its campaign for Prop A, a ballot measure to improve and stabilize civilian oversight of police, on Tuesday at Noon on the South Plaza of City Hall. The Coalition discussed why voters must vote NO on Prop B.

Groups ranging from the NAACP to Public Citizen, from the Austin Central Labor Council to MEASURE, Dove Springs Proud and the Travis County Democratic Party agree that voters should choose the REAL Austin Police Oversight Act in May and vote NO on the faux-APOA, on the ballot as Prop B.

“The REAL Austin Police Oversight Act, Prop A, authorizes civilians to do basic fact-finding around complaints against police, ensures that police and residents can file anonymous complaints if they fear retaliation, authorizes recommendations to the chief, and creates greater transparency in cases where there is a dispute between the civilian oversight team and the Chief about discipline,” said **Chris Harris, Board President for Equity Action**. “This is a moderate proposal that builds on the best things about our current system, before it was blown up in 2021 by police association grievances.”

The ballot will include a second Austin Police Oversight Act with nearly the same caption but very different content. They can be distinguished by the name of the sponsoring group, but even that is deceptive.

In December of 2021, after the police association filed dozens of grievances against the Office of Police Oversight, an arbitrator removed all independent fact finding authority from that office based on language in the 2018 police contract.

“Democrats support giving our police the salaries, benefits and stability they deserve, and we also support appropriate civilian oversight,” said **Katie Naranjo, Chair of the Travis County Democratic Party**. “After more than two decades of trying to get stable and effective civilian oversight through contract negotiations, it is clear that community endorsed standards need to be in place to ensure that a basic level of oversight is set in a police contract. . That is what Prop A does.”

“Our opponents -- Save Austin Now, the Police Association, and until recently Austin’s now-ousted City Manager -- have said that Prop A is “illegal.” That is a lie and they fully understand why,” said **Rebecca Webber, Equity Action Treasurer**, attorney and former Chair of the Public Safety Commission. “Prop A will re-empower the oversight system created by the City in 2017, and some provisions will act as minimum standards for the next 4-year police contract. If the Austin Police Association chooses not to return to the table, those provisions are severable and we will still have far better oversight than we have today.”

Misdirection and apparent mistruths appears to be the hallmark of the association. “The Police Association has continued to try to polarize the issue of accountability,” said **Yasmine Smith, Esq., Vice President of Justice and Advocacy for the Austin Area Urban League**. “This is not an ‘us versus them’ conversation. This is a conversation about evolution through accountability so that we *all* can feel safe and so that those that wear the badge with integrity and honor aren’t sullied by the misdeeds of their lesser counterparts. This is a conversation about democracy that demands the will of the people to be heard.”

“GAVA (Go Austin Vamos Austin) like Dove Springs Proud, PODER, Grassroots Leadership and Undoing Whitesupremacy Austin among many other organizations that believe police misconduct and brutality are serious issues and stronger civilian oversight, accountability and transparency are important and should be robust and stable.” said **Monica Guzman with Go Austin Vamos Austin (GAVA)**.

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Equity Action is a Texas nonprofit 501(c)(4) corporation focused on strengthening and advancing local transformative criminal justice efforts.

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