PROCLAMATION

City and County of Denver

Proclamation No. 21-1142
Opposition to Initiative 304 and the Immediate Cuts to Resident Services and Programs for Children, Mental Health, Homelessness and More It Would Inflict on Denver

WHEREAS, in July 2021 a signature-gathering effort that would become known as Initiative 304 was deemed sufficient by the Denver Clerk and Recorder after the campaign paid signature gatherers from a source of unknown origins to collect Denver voter signatures; and

WHEREAS, Initiative 304 was placed on Denver's November 2021 ballot without any attempt by the proponents to work with the Mayor, City Council or community members and does not address any tax or policy concerns that have been identified by Denver's elected leaders, nonprofit groups or citizen organizations; and

WHEREAS, Initiative 304 is unnecessary and will harm Denver by forcing the city to immediately reduce its sales-tax rate from 4.81% to 4.5%, which depending on how the ordinance's impact on marijuana taxes is interpreted, would translate to an immediate cut of $4.7 million to $8 million to the current 2021 budget before the end of the year and annual cuts of up to $80 million to city resident and community services in 2022 and beyond; and

WHEREAS, local governments in Colorado have limited revenue options to fund resident services, primarily sales and property taxes, and Denver has worked to limit the disparate impact of the sales tax on low-income residents by exempting food, fuel, medicine, and feminine hygiene products, and sales-tax is paid in part by visitors unlike the property tax; and

WHEREAS, Initiated Ordinance 304 will force cuts to essential resident services — such as road repairs, park maintenance, mental health, homeless services and fire protection — at a time when Denver is doing everything possible to recover from the pandemic, and the scale of these cuts could be the equivalent of having to cut: 390 uniformed police, sheriff or firefighters; the entire Denver Public Library budget; or the all city funding dedicated to current and future Parks; and

WHEREAS, Denver voters have previously approved funding for the Denver Preschool Program, Denver Prosperity Fund for college scholarships, Homelessness Resolution Fund, and other dedicated funds for mental health, climate and healthy foods, to address our city's highest priority needs, and Initiated Ordinance 304 will also force unnecessary and dangerous cuts to each of these programs, disingenuously undermining the will of voters and harming youth, vulnerable residents and climate protection at a time when needs are at their greatest; so

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. That the Council of the City and County of Denver opposes initiated ordinance 304 on Denver's November 2021 ballot and urges voters to reject the harmful cuts 304 would make to essential resident services and critical programs previously approved by Denver voters.

Section 2. That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL October 4, 2021

Stacie Gilmore _____ PRESIDENT