WS #1

ORDINANCE NO. 019497

AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE EXTENDING EMERGENCY ORDINANCE NO. 019333 AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ASSIGN PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES TO ASSIST IN ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN AND PUBLIC SAFETY CRISIS RESULTING FROM A MASS MIGRATION THROUGH EL PASO

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2022, the Mayor and City Council of the City of El Paso (the "City") passed an Emergency Ordinance No. 019333 "Authorizing the City Manager to Assign Personnel and Resources to Assist in Addressing the Humanitarian and Public Safety Crisis Resulting from a Mass Migration through the City of El Paso"; and

WHEREAS, thousands of migrants from Latin America gathered at or near the U.S.-Mexico border in hopes that President Biden would ease immigration restrictions that will make it easier to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Biden administration ended the COVID-19 public health emergency on May 11, 2023 ending all use of Title 42 as a mechanism to control the border; and

WHEREAS, on the eve of the expiration of Title 42, there were an estimated 152,000 migrants in northern Mexico with approximately 60,000 in the State of Chihuahua, and 35,000 in Ciudad Juarez according to U.S. federal statistical records; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest had 162,317 land border encounters in the month of March, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the El Paso sector of CBP had 39,512 land border encounters in the month of March, 2023 and a total of 265,037 encounters for federal fiscal year 2023; and

WHEREAS, when the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's ("CBP") Central Processing Center is over capacity and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) space is unavailable, that is when the potential for street releases arises; and

WHEREAS, CBP has released many migrants onto downtown streets leaving many migrants without shelter; and

WHEREAS, in the month of April 2023, approximately 1,750 migrants have been released into the community weekly; and

WHEREAS, in response to the street releases, the El Paso City-County Office of Emergency Management ("OEM") reallocated twenty-nine COVID-19 Operations staff to assist as migrant shelter surge staff, and on May 17, 2022, this staff began orientation training at Casa

del Refugiado, the NGO's largest hospitality site; and

WHEREAS, OEM has created a job specification, for general disaster operations to include humanitarian relief duties to hire and assign staff to assist with NGO capacity with over 40 staff currently assigned; and

WHEREAS, beginning in late August 2022, the El Paso sector experienced a surge of over 2,000 migrants presenting themselves daily to CBP, primarily made up of unsponsored single adults from Venezuela, resulting in over 1,000 street releases by CBP; and

WHEREAS, in the Fall of 2022, the City expended significant resources to create and staff a Welcome Center to assist with transportation assistance, providing long-distance charter services and over 39,000 meals to over 19,300 migrants through October 20, 2022; and

WHEREAS, due to this high volume, the number of refugees and asylum seekers released to the NGO and the City's Migrant Welcome Center, was over 1,000 on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, on September 7, 2022, the City and OEM stood up a migrant Welcome Center to assist with transportation assistance providing services and meals to over 19,300 migrants through October 20, 2022, and

WHEREAS, the release of mass groups of people without access to potable water, food, or shelter exposes the migrants and El Paso residents to the origination and spread of potential and actual disease; and

WHEREAS, in response to the number of migrants arriving at the border, on January 5, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security created a humanitarian parole program for migrants from Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua similar to the program already available to Venezuelans; and

WHEREAS, on January 8, 2023, President Biden visited the border to assess the situation in part because the number of migrants has gained the attention of the media and national leadership; and

WHEREAS, there are significant public safety and security concerns related to the wave of migration, including but not limited to the risk to injury or loss of life with migrants in El Paso streets with little or no resources on days that reach hot or cold temperatures and the inherent risks that come with increased demand on local shelters; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2023, border officials barricaded and closed down the Paso del Norte bridge due to a breach of public safety involving hundreds of migrants present on the

bridge due to rumors about the relaxation of immigration restrictions circulated on social media sites; and

WHEREAS, for these reasons, the City is faced with the imminent threat of widespread injury or loss of life resulting from a surge in transient migrants traveling to the region; and

WHEREAS, there is the potential for loss of property for both residents and migrants due to those who would take financial advantage of this wave of migrants; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Aviation has the authority, as granted by the El Paso City Council, to manage the day-to-day operation of EPIA and to ensure that those operations are conducted in compliance with the rules and regulations regarding airports under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 22 of the Texas Transportation Code, and Title 14 of the El Paso City Code, as well as federal, state, and local health and safety regulations to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all occupants and travelers making use of EPIA facilities; and

WHEREAS, EPIA in recent past, became saturated with migrants awaiting air travel and could need to take measures to preserve the health and safety of its customers, employees and the public, as well as measures to secure its facilities as the demand for air travel increases exponentially; and

WHEREAS, the City of El Paso is home to 4 international ports of entry between Texas and Mexico; and

WHEREAS, based on mass migration events in the recent past, the City anticipates significant delays at the international ports-of-entry to include trade; and

WHEREAS, the encampment of large groups of migrants on City rights of way, parks and other City property has led to street closure and cessation of the streetcar service; and

WHEREAS, in awaiting the due support of the federal government, the City finds that the expenditure of public funds for staff to coordinate resources and supplies, serve as shelter surge staff and transport migrants released in the City of El Paso accomplishes a valid public purpose of protecting public infrastructure, and protecting the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of El Paso; and

WHEREAS, in order to protect the health of persons in the municipality, the City Council wishes to continue to assist the local NGO with surge staff, coordination of resources and supplies, and transportation in light of the continued high number of community releases; and

WHEREAS, OEM and the City have and will continue to prepare and evaluate the need

for mass emergency sheltering thanks to the expiration of Title 42 and other regional migration surges that may impact the El Paso region; and

WHEREAS, the El Paso City Charter Section 3.10, allows for the adoption of one or more emergency ordinances to meet a public emergency affecting life, health, property, or the public peace; and

WHEREAS, Section 121.003 of the Texas Health & Safety Code states that a municipality may enforce any law that is reasonably necessary to protect public health; and

WHEREAS, Section 122.006 of the Texas Health & Safety Code provides home-rule municipalities express authority to adopt rules to protect the health of persons in the municipality, including quarantine rules to protect the residents against communicable disease; and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance shall remain in effect until otherwise terminated, re-enacted, superseded by a conflicting ordinance, El Paso Local Health Authority Ordinance, state or federal law, or repealed automatically as of the 31st day following the date on which it was adopted unless re-enacted pursuant to City Charter Section 3.10.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:

1. That the Emergency Ordinance No. 019333 passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of El Paso on May 23, 2022 is hereby re-enacted and shall continue for thirty (30) days unless re-enacted in accordance with City Charter Section 3.10 or until terminated by City Council, whichever is sooner.

2. This ordinance is adopted as an emergency measure with the unanimous vote of the City Council Representatives present and the consent of the Mayor and pursuant to City Charter Section 3.10.

(Signature begin on Following Page)

PASSED AND ADOPTED, this 22nd day of May, 2023.

THE CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS

Oscar Leeser
Mayor

ATTEST:

Laura D. Prine
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Karla M. Nieman
City Attorney

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Mario M. D'Agostino, Deputy City Manager
Public Health & Safety