



ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL

524 West 59th Street, 53334HH
New York, NY, 10019
212-237-8001

January 13, 2025

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council
55 Trinity Ave. SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: Ordinance #25-O-1009 amending elements related to the Governing Board of the Office of Inspector General and the Office of Inspector General.

Honorable Mayor, Members of the City Council:

The Association of Inspectors General (AIG) is an independent, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization that has represented thousands of members working in hundreds of Inspectors General offices across the United States and internationally in advancing the mission of independent oversight in government for more than 30 years. The AIG promulgates the Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General, known as the Green Book; that provides guidance and best practices considered to be the gold standard for state and local government Offices of Inspector General.

The Association of Inspectors General (AIG) has grave concerns about the City of Atlanta's move to strip away the authority of the Office of Inspector General through proposed Ordinance #25-O-1009. If this ordinance becomes law, Atlanta's OIG will no longer be able to effectively provide the oversight work that it was established to do for Atlanta's residents just a few years ago.

The AIG strongly opposes the proposed legislation and recommends that the City Council reject the proposed Ordinance #25-O-1009 in its entirety.

The proposed ordinance would compel the Atlanta OIG to operate in opposition to many of the principles and standards that have been essential components of effective government oversight at the local, state and federal levels for decades. While there are several parts of the proposed Ordinance #25-O-1009 that are contrary to best practices, a few adverse consequences stand out:

- **Removing the term “corruption” from the OIG’s scope of authority altogether and replacing it with an even higher threshold of wrongdoing:** It is impossible to overstate how concerning it is that the proposed ordinance would expressly remove the OIG’s ability to investigate “corruption” and instead restrict the office to initiating investigations based on a higher (but vague and subjective) standard of “gross” or “substantial” violations of the law.

There are no definitions of what these higher thresholds mean and perhaps that's the

point. This change could easily be interpreted to signal that the Inspector General should overlook credible allegations of misconduct including fraud, waste or abuse out of fear that the evidence would not reach this new undefined, higher standard of misconduct. Put another way, investigations into public corruption that should be opened, won't get opened.

- **Appointment of the OIG's Governing Board Would Come Under the Mayor's Authority:** The proposed ordinance would effectively take the power to appoint the Governing Board away from the public and transfer it to the Mayor. The Governing Board's central role is to monitor the Inspector General's work and great care was taken to giving Atlanta's communities the authority of appointing those Board members. The proposed legislation would essentially transfer that power from the public and give final approval authority to the Mayor.
- **The Inspector General's Access to City Records Would Become More Difficult and Investigations Would Become Compromised:** Proposed legislation #25-O-1009 removes the OIG's current ability to have immediate access to the City's records and replaces it with a process that requires the OIG to request those records from the very parties who may be the subject of an investigation, compromising the investigation in the process. Although the OIG is embedded in City of Atlanta government, the ordinance would require the Inspector General to issue a subpoena for City records. Additionally, the OIG would be required to disclose confidential information to the subjects of investigations to obtain records and other critical evidence.

It won't escape anyone's notice that the proposed legislation follows several high-profile Atlanta OIG investigations that have demonstrated the office's effectiveness in revealing misconduct at all levels of government. If passed, this proposed ordinance would strip the OIG's ability to perform the kind of work that was widely reported on throughout 2024. The legislation would create an OIG that is effectively under the control of the Mayor's Office.

The draft ordinance was presented following a disappointing, hasty, and incomplete review of the OIG by the Temporary Task Force that did not seek open discussion with affected stakeholders, subject-matter experts and the Inspector General herself. Offices of inspectors general across the nation have publicly disapproved of the proposed ordinance for disregarding best practices.

The AIG looks forward to collaborating on new legislation that incorporates the needs of the OIG and ensures the office remains fully independent and empowered to perform its work on behalf of Atlanta's residents.

Sincerely,



Will Fletcher
President, Association of Inspectors General

DM/wf

cc: Andre Dickens, Mayor

Doug Shipman, City Council President
Michael Julian Bond, At Large Post 1
Matt Westmoreland, At Large Post 2
Jason Winston, District 1
Amir R. Farokhi, District 2
Byron Amos, District 3
Jason Dozier, District 4
Lilliana Bakhtiari, District 5
Alex Wan, District 6
Howard Shook, District 7 (Temporary Task Force Member)
Mary Norwood, District 8
Dustin Hillis, District 9
Andrea I. Boone, District 10
Marci Collier Overstreet, District 11 (Temporary Task Force Member)
Antonio Lewis, District 12
Corrine Lindo, Municipal Clerk
Leah Ward Sears, Former Chief Justice (Temporary Task Force Member)
David Dove, Executive Counsel for Governor Brian P. Kemp's Office (Temporary Task Force Member)
Richard Deane, Of Counsel - Jones Day (Temporary Task Force Member)
Tanya Miller, General Counsel – Georgia Federation of Public Service Employees (Temporary Task Force Member)
Norman Brothers, EVP & Chief Legal and Compliance Officer – UPS (Temporary Task Force Member)
Nicola Hines, Chair - Governing Board
Todd Gray, Vice Chair – Governing Board
Rebecca Brubaker, Governing Board
Andrew Cohen, Governing Board
Natalie Lewis, Governing Board
Lisa Liang, Governing Board
Terri Simmons, Governing Board
Richard Taylor, Governing Board
Cecily Welch, Governing Board
Shannon K. Manigault, Inspector General