

RECOMMENDATION
COMMISSION ON IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS
20140220-005B
Regarding the "Austin: Welcoming City" Initiative
City of Austin, Texas

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and Travis County are home to diverse immigrant populations and we welcome them in our city and county; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2010 U.S. Census approximately 18% of residents are foreign-born, and

WHEREAS immigrants comprise a vital part of our local workforce and approximately one-third (150,006) of the local labor force is made up of individuals who speak a language other than English at home.

WHEREAS the City of Austin and Travis County are committed to the public safety, health and quality of life of all residents regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, and physical or mental disability,

WHEREAS the aforementioned commitment is reflected in the existence of the Commission on Immigrant Affairs to advise the city council on issues of common concern to immigrants, particularly in the areas of health and human services, education, and the demographic makeup of the Austin immigrant community,

WHEREAS since the beginning of 2013, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs has been gathering input from local immigrant service providers on their work, their needs and how the City of Austin might better support the provision of services to the immigrant community,

WHEREAS this input has resulted in an increased awareness of: the large variety of immigrant service providers in the City of Austin that are not tapped into existing service provider networks; the variety of commonalities and disparities of immigrant needs based on populations of origin; and the degree to which the issues and barriers these organizations face cross-pollinates across service sectors,

WHEREAS the potential for immigration reform and the implementation of healthcare reform, the diversity of Austin's current and incoming immigrant populations, and existing barriers to immigrant service integration, are challenges to and/or hinder the delivery of services to the immigrant community,

WHEREAS the City of Austin is a part of Welcoming America, and formally declared itself a Welcoming City on September 19th, 2013, yet has not yet engaged the community in defining a vision for itself as such,

WHEREAS the conditions for a Welcoming City include: Engaging all relevant sectors, such as government, business, non-profit, and to work together to create a welcoming community climate that supports long-term integration; a commitment to institutionalizing strategies that ensure the ongoing inclusion and long-term economic and social integration of newcomers; and engaging newcomers and long-time residents to find common ground and shared leadership.

WHEREAS issues pertaining to immigrants are both a Health and Human Services and an Economic Development issue,

THEREFORE, be it:

RECOMMENDED, that City Council work with the City Manager to engage the Economic Development and Health and Human Services department in engaging community stakeholders in defining the vision for Austin as a Welcoming City

RECOMMENDED that the community engagement process include partnering with the Commission on Immigrant Affairs in facilitating the organization and delivery of the City of Austin's first Immigrant Affairs Conference: "Austin: A Welcoming City" to engage the community and its stakeholders in defining Austin as an welcoming community and to provide a forum for service providers to participate in targeted discussions to share and learn about available resources; work towards a collaborative, efficient approach to the provision of services through facilitated networking; and begin troubleshooting current and future issues that will affect Austin's immigrant population.

PASSED by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on February 20, 2014.

Unanimously approved by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on a 4-0 vote with Commissioners Sandra Molinari and Nancy Lira absent.

Attest:

Connie H. Gonzales, Staff Liaison