

RESOLUTION NO. 20140417-055

WHEREAS, the Austin City Council seeks to enhance the public welfare by declaring that freedom from domestic violence is a fundamental human right; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Disease Control has estimated that one in four women in the U.S. and one in seven men in the U.S. experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has recognized domestic violence as a human rights issue; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Department of Public Safety reports that the total number of family violence incidents in Texas in 2012 was 188,992, a 6.2 percent increase from the total number of family violence incidents in Texas in 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Department of Public Safety reports that the total number of family violence incidents in Travis County in 2012 was 8,893, a 14.3 percent increase from the total number of family violence incidents in Travis County in 2011; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has stated that “violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation” and that responses to violence should recognize human rights as a premise; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has urged the United States to reassess laws and policies for protecting domestic violence survivors; and

WHEREAS, survivors of domestic violence have the fundamental right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Constitution provides that a crime victim has the “right to be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process”; and

WHEREAS, Tex. Local Gov’t Code § 51.001 authorizes the Austin City Council to enact this resolution; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement, city and local agencies, courts and other local government entities are charged with protecting those who suffer cruelty, oppression, and violence; and

WHEREAS, survivors of domestic violence face many challenges, some of which directly or indirectly relate to services provided by the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force (ATCFVTF) was created in 1989 by leaders in the Austin community, including members of the Austin Police Department, the Travis County Sheriff’s Office, Travis County judges, City of Austin Municipal judges, and the District and

County Attorney's offices, in order to help identify and implement improvements in system response to domestic violence and sexual assault through education and policy development; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found in Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. United States that the United States' failure to protect women from gender-based violence constitutes discrimination and a human rights violation and urged the United States to enact law and policy reforms at all levels to protect survivors of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, the mission of ATCFVTF is to reduce family violence and promote safety through a coordinated community response and is a voluntary community endeavor, which meet monthly, and is open to anyone interested in the prevention of family violence; and

WHEREAS, the ATCFVTF addresses all elements of the spectrum of issues related to domestic violence, including prevention and early intervention; and

WHEREAS, over the past 24 years, the coordinated community response has resulted in numerous initiatives, most notably a specialized family violence court established in 1999, and has expanded to include many other community partners; and

WHEREAS, the ATCFVTF has created a Sub-Committee on Human Rights; and

WHEREAS, the ATCFVTF has partnered with the University of Texas School of Law's Domestic Violence Clinic, which enables students to assume semester-long projects in order to advocate for the rights of domestic violence survivors; and

WHEREAS, the recognition that domestic violence is a human rights issue will raise public awareness and encourage family-violence education in communities; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

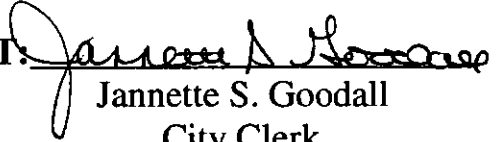
BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

1. That the City recognizes that domestic violence is a human rights concern;
2. That the City declares that freedom from domestic violence is a fundamental human right;
3. That the City will incorporate these principles into their policies and continue to secure this human right on behalf of their citizens;
4. That the City requests that the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force identify the gaps and barriers in the City's service delivery to survivors of domestic violence;

5. That the City requests that the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force provide biennial reports over the next six years on the challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence and recommendations on how to improve services to those survivors, with a report dedicated to each of the following topics: (1) law enforcement and probation, (2) mental and physical healthcare, and (3) criminal prosecution;
6. That the City will cooperate with the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force in the compilation of its reports.

ADOPTED: April 17, 2014

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk