<u>Draft Resolution:</u>

WHEREAS, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a range of complex neurodevelopment disorders, characterized by social impairments, communication difficulties, and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior; and

WHEREAS, ASD can cause significant impairment in social, occupational and other areas of functioning; and

WHEREAS, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a behavioral intervention proven effective in addressing the core symptoms of autism as well as developing skills and improving and enhancing functioning in numerous areas that affect the health & wellbeing of people with ASD; and

WHEREAS, ABA has been endorsed as an effective treatment for autism by the American Academy of Pediatricians, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States Surgeon General, the American Psychological Association Practice Organization, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, Children who receive early intensive behavioral treatment have been known to show substantial gains in cognition, language, academic performance, and adaptive behavior as well as some measures of social behavior, and their outcomes have been significantly better than those of children in control groups who did not receive ABA therapy; and

WHEREAS, Autism Speaks is considered to be one of the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families; and

WHERAS, Autism Speaks found that the average cost to provide ABA benefits was 46 cents per month per member using 3 year cost data from 6 states that voluntarily provide ABA benefits; and

WHEREAS, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Arizona voluntarily added ABA benefits, and data from these states show that the actual cost of providing ABA benefits was anywhere from 293% less to 1,261% less than projected costs; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin (City) has a self-funded health benefit plan (self-funded plan), and the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 preempts most state insurance regulation, including benefit reform be applied to self-funded plans; and

WHEREAS, Texas reformed its insurance laws in 2007 requiring health benefit plans, other than self-funded plans, to provide ABA benefits to children and in 2013 enacted legislation to remove age limits for ABA coverage.

WHEREAS, the City does not currently provide coverage for ABA treatment; and

WHEREAS, Travis County and the Austin Independent School District (AISD) both have self-funded plans and currently provide coverage for ABA treatment; and

WHEREAS, as of September 2014, there were only seventeen children identified with autism in the City's health plan; and

WHEREAS, providing ABA benefits in the City's benefits package would dramatically improve the quality of life for City employees with children with autism, and would be consistent with the practices of other local governmental bodies including AISD and Travis County; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The City Manager is directed to incorporate Applied Behavioral Analysis benefits at a level that is not less than the level of coverage required of "health benefit plans" that are regulated by Section 1355 of the Texas Insurance Code, as part of the City employee benefits package in the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 proposed budget.