

Testimony before Austin City Council

Emilio Zamora

August 27, 2015

Mayor Steve Adler and Austin Council Members. My name is Emilio Zamora. I am a Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin. I served on the first Hispanic Quality of Life Commission (HQLC), as an appointee of past council member Mike Martínez and continue to serve, thanks to my current appointment by Council Member Ann Kitchen.

The HQLC has worked long and hard to develop the proposed policy and budget recommendations. Our current recommendations represent a shortened list of last year's recommendations. The past City Council only accepted two recommendations (infrastructure work in the Rundberg area and the home buyout in Dove Springs), both of which originated elsewhere, that is, the HQLC did not initiate them, the commission merely expressed support for them.

Since members of the Commission and HQLC supporters have already visited with the Mayor, Council Members and staff and informed them of our recommendations, I will only speak to a select group of recommendations.

First, we call on you to establish a City Diversity Office to promote respect for difference and to advance the cause of fairness and justice in all that city government does in Austin. A number of cities throughout the country offer different models that we could emulate. We also recommended a parity principle that is embedded in the recommendation for a City Diversity Office. It will provide Council and staff a guiding measure of proportionality. The most obvious consideration would be the numerical representation of the Hispanic population, as well as its significant growth rate and continued marginalization.

Second, we call on the City Council to institutionalize the current Joint City, County, AISD Student Mobility Task Force into a permanent office that consolidates all current joint activities and seeks the necessary funds from public and private sources to advance our educational work among youth with a comprehensive and truly effective program akin to initiatives in places like Los Angeles.



Third, the HQLC also recommends the establishment of a Hispanic/Latino Economic Development Corporation to meet the critical need of wealth creation and business development. We cannot expect the Hispanic community to advance to points of self-sufficiency beyond its estimated claim of only .001 percent of the wealth in the city without official support.

In underscoring the above recommendations, I do not mean to say that the other recommendations lack merit and do not deserve your support. The Hispanic community also has critical needs in other areas such as health, housing, cultural arts, and youth.

In conclusion, we cannot will our way to equity and fairness. The City Council's decision to establish a Task Force on the Hispanic Quality of Life in 2008 and the establishment of a Commission—now in its third year—are laudable expressions of concern. We must now give serious attention to the recommendations before you and take meaningful steps to fulfill the promise of government responsiveness, Hispanic inclusion, and the improvement of their quality of life in Austin.

Thank you for your attention.



Austin Diversity Office \$305,000

Three FTE position assigned to the Human Resources Division

Director	\$85,000
Associate Director	\$65,000
Clerical Position	\$35,000
Travel and Per Diem	\$10,000
Operating Costs	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$210,000
City-Wide Conference	\$15,000
Consulting Services	\$50,000
Publicity and Marketing	\$15,000
Miscellaneous	\$10,000

