



August 28, 2017

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I'm writing in support of Agenda Item #59, Alternatives to Panhandling on the 8/31/17 Council agenda.

This item helps focus City efforts to engage the public in ongoing and forthcoming efforts to end homelessness. Specifically, the item seeks to curb panhandling by redirecting the compassion expressed by giving to panhandlers to other more productive giving and engagement.

The resolution is consistent the ECHO draft Action Plan to End Homelessness that was written in consultation with

- Persons with lived experiences of homelessness
- Services providers,
- Elected officials,
- Business leaders
- City of Austin and Travis County staff, and
- Many other public- and private-sector stakeholders who participated in the public input process, including input sessions, meetings and interviews.

The Plan includes Community Engagement as a key component so that all of Austin can see how they might play a role in ending homelessness. The Plan states that as a community, we should

- Create an options menu for the public to be involved in the solutions
- Bring in new public and private partners, including the faith community, private donors and other funders and volunteers
- Create an electronic platform for volunteers to support the work of ending homelessness across systems

This resolution advances these initiatives as it directs the City Manager to work with stakeholders like ECHO and neighborhood leaders to explore the use of technology to publicize solutions to homelessness, develop connections between services and the people who need them and to engage the public in the efforts to end homelessness. ECHO is willing to support the work described in this resolution.

I encourage you to support Item #59, Alternatives to Panhandling.

Sincerely,

Ann Howard
Executive Director

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