



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
Commission on Immigrant Affairs
Recommendation Number: 20180212-004B
Regarding: Fulfilling Refugee Housing Needs

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, the City of Austin is the largest refugee resettlement site in Central Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs passed recommendation number 20160121-004Ba to participate in the White House's Building Welcoming Communities Campaign and welcome refugees on January 21, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the refugee community in the City of Austin is in dire need of affordable housing in the form of rental assistance. The average rent of a 2-bedroom apartment for a refugee family of 5 to 6 people is \$1,400 per month, plus \$150 for utilities. For a refugee family with one working member, making \$8 - \$10 an hour, a \$1,550 monthly rental cost is out of reach; and

WHEREAS, living within the City of Austin limits is necessary for refugees due to the availability of public transportation, refugee services, specialized school programs, community support, volunteers with language skills, medical facilities and jobs, which are not available in less expensive housing outside the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, members from the City of Austin Commission on Immigrant affairs met with various City of Austin department officials to identify rental assistance resources for refugees living within the City of Austin. The departments included: HACA (Housing Authority City of Austin), CARITAS, ECHO (Ending Community Homelessness Coalition), Austin Public Health, and the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD). Given their budgets are already channeled to help already identified needy families within the City, these departments were not able to identify additional resources to help refugees.

THEREFORE, be it:

RECOMMENDED, the City of Austin create a rental assistance grant of at least \$75,000 to help at minimum 16 refugee families. The grant provides \$300 in rental assistance per refugee family per month for 12 months. For the 16 families, the amount will add up to \$57,600. The remainder, \$17,400, is allocated for administering the fund.

PASSED by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on March 12, 2018
Unanimously approved by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on an 8-0 vote with Commissioners Walid Kobrosly, Pedro Villalobos, and Aditya Rastogi absent.

Attest:

Connie H. Gonzales