



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20190313-03A

Date: March 13, 2019

Subject: Recommendation for Truth in Advertising Signage

Motioned By: Vice Chair Rebecca Austen

Seconded By: Dyana Limon-Mercado

Recommendation

The Commission for Women recommends that strip clubs and companies based in the sex industry be required to remove the word “girl” or “boy” in any references to services offered on signage and advertising.

Description of Recommendation to Council

WHEREAS, the Commission for Women (“Commission”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body to the City Council (“Council”) and city manager concerning the needs and problems of women in the Austin area and shall recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront women in social, economic and vocational pursuits. The Commission shall develop goals and coordinate research for planning, programming, and action relating to opportunities, needs, problems, and contributions of women in the city; and

WHEREAS, on January 9, 2019 at the monthly Commission meeting citizens presented their grievance of having to explain to their young daughters the misleading signage advertising “live nude girls” that an Austin strip club at 51st Street and Hwy 35 uses; and

WHEREAS, the term “girl” or “boy” associated with live nude implies that the person’s body is for sale as a commodity versus a service being performed like “exotic dancing”; and

WHEREAS, the term girl is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary and commonly understood to mean “female child or young female” and the term boy as “male child or young male” these are references to a person under the age of 18 which is under the lawful age of sexual consent; and

WHEREAS, UT’s Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault authored a report that found there are approximately “313,000 victims of labor and sex trafficking in Texas and that roughly a fourth of them are children and people under the age of 26 who have been forced into prostitution”; and

WHEREAS, the Highway 35 corridor also is known to be part of the route utilized by sex traffickers and signage like “live nude girls” can be seen from the highway and can also be considered as Austin’s support for these despicable acts; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Trade Commission attempts to protect the American consumer through Truth in Advertising “When consumers see or hear an advertisement, whether it’s on the

Internet, radio or television, or anywhere else, federal law says that ad must be truthful, not misleading, and, when appropriate, backed by scientific evidence.”; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission recommends that the City of Austin’s sign ordinance should reflect standards that disallow the use of “girl” or “boy” being referenced in conjunction to sex or erotic based companies. That advertising or promotion of business should focus on the service offered rather than commoditizing human beings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission recommends that strip clubs and companies based in the sex industry in Austin be required to change public signage and advertising immediately to remove the word “girl” or “boy” in any references to services offered.

Rationale

Attached

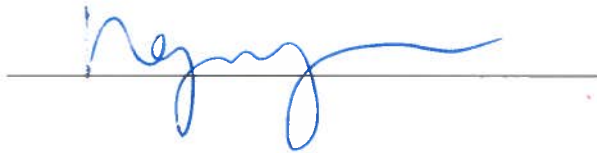
Vote

For: 6

Against: 0

Absent: 2

Attest: Vicky Nguyen, Staff Liaison

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Vicky Nguyen'.

HANSEN/FULLER PRESENTATION TO WOMEN'S COMMISSION

When you think of the word “girl,” what comes to mind? [IMAGES OF YOUNG GIRLS]

How about this? [PHOTO OF PLEASURES NIGHT CLUB “LIVE NUDE GIRLS” SIGN]

This is the sign, located right off of southbound 1-35 near 51st street, that our young daughters - old enough to read - pass every morning on the way to school.

We work hard at home to provide a safe, loving environment for our daughters, to fortify their self-esteem. But what happens when they walk out our doors? Our girls must enter a world where 79,000 Texas minors and youth are victims of human trafficking. A world where 10-14 year-olds are the largest age group of victims of sexual assault in Texas. A world where, every morning, on the way to school, our daughters receive a very clear message, via three, short words - live nude girls. Three words that tell them they are nothing more than commodities. Three words that give a wink and a nod to would-be traffickers and predators who feel entitled to our daughter's bodies.

We know that boys are victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking, too, but there are no signs in Austin that read “live nude boys.” If there were, they would most certainly be met with opposition. Yet pedophilic culture is so normalized with respect to girls that most Austinites on i-35 don't bat an eye at the “Live Nude Girls” sign on their daily commute. Let's change that now.

Today we're asking that the city ban the use, by adult entertainment establishments, of any language referencing minors. Additionally, we ask the city to prohibit language that promotes any human as the product for sale, versus the activity or service that's being provided.

For example: when you go to the doctor you don't encounter signs for live girl doctors; when you go get your car repaired you aren't looking for a live girl mechanic. Instead, the signs represent what is for sale: doctors offer diagnosis, mechanics fix cars. When a sign reads “live nude girls,” the person becomes the product - what's being sold is a girl. This kind of advertising is not only false, it's harmful. For one, girl refers to a minor, but replacing the word with woman doesn't reduce the harm. It should be replaced with the service offered: dancing. Humans can sell their services or access to their abilities, but *humans* aren't for sale.

Language really matters - words make the world. Big huge systemic problems seem impossible to tackle, but small but important changes like this can end up being powerful and impactful. Austin has the opportunity to lead the way in a sort of language reform that can spread further than our city limits. Please join us in sending the message that our girls - and *all* humans, for that matter - are not for sale.



