



## RECOMMENDATION FOR MENSTRUAL EQUITY

### Commission for Women

Recommendation Number 20190710-03a03: The Commission for Women recommends funding be used to develop and implement a menstrual equity program in all City facilities.

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, menstruation products, such as pads, tampons, cups, and liners, are necessary purchases for the vast majority of women. However, 1 in 4 women struggled to purchase period supplies within the past year due to lack of income. For these women, menstruation products are a luxury item they cannot afford — putting them at risk of isolation, infection, and missed days of school and work. By making menstrual products freely accessible in public facilities, governments can offset this inequity.

WHEREAS, the average woman has her period for 2,535 days of her life, which is about seven years and will spend about \$18,000 on menstrual products. However, tampons and pads are subject to sales tax and not covered by food stamps. For women below the poverty line, this means they may go without menstrual products, which may lead to missed work and school. Furthermore, addressing menstrual equity also tackles the financial gap women face; female employees are paid 79 cents to men's dollar yet often face higher prices for services like dry cleaning and basic items like shampoo and hygiene products.

WHEREAS, in 2015, New York City councilmember Julissa Ferreras Copeland began a menstrual equity pilot program at the High School for Arts and Business in Corona, Queens. According to the principal at the 850 student Queens school, attendance went up 2.4 percent in the months after the program launched, which she attributes to the free dispensers. The program has since expanded to include all New York City public schools, and also \$540,000 worth of pads and tampons annually for New York City's homeless shelters. In addition, feminine hygiene products are also provided at New York City prisons.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission requests funding be put in place for the development and enactment of a menstrual equity program in all City facilities.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, if the Council is unable to absorb the additional cost of these necessary products for Austin's female citizens, the Commission requests a pilot program be launched for one year at two to three City facilities. The

Commission recommends that the locations of the pilot be public spaces that are frequented by women experiencing homelessness in Austin, as well as the greater Austin population (such as Central and Terrazas libraries), and at facilities which serve low income school age girls, such as community centers, athletic facilities and locations which provide after school programming (such as Dove Springs Recreation Center, Montopolis Recreation Center, or Gustavo "Gus" L. Garcia Recreation Center). The program should account for the one time cost of installing dispensers and/or holders in the bathrooms of facilities included in the pilot program. At the conclusion of the pilot period, the City shall examine data on the effectiveness and impact of the program, with the goal to expand services to other or all City facilities following the pilot. The Commission has made rough estimates of costs based on data available for example: 100,000 visitors to the Central Library per month, average half are women (50,000), one quarter of those women are of menstruating age (12,500) and half of that are on their period (6,250) and one quarter of those women who are on their period will be in need of a feminine product (3,125), at a cost of \$.10- \$.20 per product, could cost the City \$312.50-\$625 per month. The Commission believes this cost estimate may be high, but the City will fully realize the cost and benefit of this program upon implementation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this program will further serve to resolve gender inequities and lead the nation in progress for women by addressing gender disparities much like the Council asked for the Commission to find in RESOLUTION NO. 20170323-054: "The Council directs the City Manager to provide City of Austin's Commission for Women and the City's Human Rights Commission documentation of all of the City's previous efforts to address gender disparities in the City of Austin. The City of Austin's Commission for Women and the City's Human Rights Commission are directed to research other potential practices that have not been documented and addressed by the City, which have an unintended disparate impact on women but are commonly used by local governmental entities comparable to the City of Austin; examine whether those practices are being used within the City, and if so, their nature and scope; and develop recommendations for modifying City policies or practices to eliminate those disparate impacts."

Date of Approval: July 10, 2019

Record of the vote: Unanimous on an 8-0 vote, three commissioners absent

Attest:  \_\_\_\_\_

Vicky Nguyen, Staff Liaison