

Late Backup



United Way for Greater Austin

September 9, 2019

Members of the Austin City Council
Austin City Hall
301 West 2nd Street
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor Adler and City Council Members,

The United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX) is grateful for the support of numerous recent City Council Resolutions to improve access to affordable, high quality child care. As the backbone organization convening the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Strategic plan, UWATX strongly encourages Council to include funding for child care services at the new Municipal Court Building in the FY 2020 budget.

High quality child care services require investments in the facilities as well operating costs. The investment of \$225,000 in one-time funding will retrofit the building to provide an appropriate environment for the developmental needs of young children. An additional \$178,976 for rent and operating expenses in FY 2020 will allow expedited operations to meet the urgent and critical need for high quality, affordable care for both City of Austin employees and the surrounding community. This will also create capacity to provide vital drop-in child care for individuals that have business at the Municipal Court. Access to safe, reliable high quality child care close to home allows parents to engage in the workforce and potentially improve their financial stability.

In the 78744 zip code where this building will be located, there are only 9 licensed child care centers that serve children from birth to age 5, and only two of these participate in the Texas Rising Star quality rating system. There are only five licensed child care homes. According to Children At Risk, this zip code qualifies as a high quality subsidized child care desert, meaning that there zero and five seats in high quality subsidized child care for every one hundred working parents (at 200% of the Federal Poverty level) in that zip code.

Access to high quality child care results in more children entering kindergarten with the social, emotional, and intellectual skills necessary for success. In Austin, only 39% of Austin children from low-income homes are entering kindergarten with the foundation needed for academic success and a disproportionate number of these are children of color.

For every child born, we have only 2,000 days before she or he enters kindergarten. It is urgent to make immediate investments in access so that our children can get the start they deserve to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathy McHorse".

Cathy McHorse
Vice President, Success By 6
The United Way for Greater Austin
Cathy.McHorse@uwatx.org