



## RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDRESSING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Commission for Women

Recommendation Number 20190911-03f: The Commission for Women recommends that the City of Austin adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to address human trafficking.

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 March 15, 2015 the Council passed Resolution No. 20151015-033 (“Resolution”), stating that (1) The City recognizes human trafficking is a human rights concern impacting Austin residents, businesses, and communities; (2) The City declares that freedom from human trafficking is a fundamental human right; and (3) The City promotes these principles and values through its policies, and continues to secure this human right on behalf of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Resolution further directed the City Manager to (1) appoint a liaison to local groups that, as determined by the City manager, are dedicated to collaborating with the City and others to achieve the shared goal of ending human trafficking in Austin; (2) to incorporate information about preventing, identifying and responding to human trafficking into existing training for City employees as may be appropriate; and (3) to develop plans and policies to prevent and reduce human trafficking related to all City tourism initiatives and City-sponsored events; and

WHEREAS, on Feb 23, 2016, the City Manager appointed Commander Stephen Deaton of the Austin Police Department as the liaison to local groups collaborating to end trafficking; Commander Deaton retired in December 2016; human trafficking crimes are now within the Organized Crime Division led by Commander Arthur Fortune, and Sergeant Jay Swann oversees the Human Trafficking Unit and is the liaison; APD is also an active partner in the [Central Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking](#); and

WHEREAS, in February 2017, it was [reported by KVUE](#) that online training regarding human trafficking was going to be deployed to city employees, but it is not clear what training was delivered or completed at that time, or to whom; all APD officers receive four hours of instruction in the academy on human trafficking, taught by organized crime personnel within the Human Trafficking Unit; the city currently plans to deploy a video for human trafficking awareness to all City of Austin employees, to help them recognize the signs of trafficking and how to report it; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been unable to determine whether plans and policies were developed to prevent and reduce human trafficking related to all City tourism and City-sponsored events; and

WHEREAS, the University of Texas Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault released a [report](#) in December 2016, "Human Trafficking by the Numbers: The Initial Benchmark of Prevalence and Economic Impact for Texas" ("UT Study"), estimating that there are approximately 313,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas, of which 79,000 are minors and youth who are victims of sex trafficking, costing the state of Texas \$6.6B per year; and,

WHEREAS, there is no formal tracking of the number of adult or youth sex trafficking victims in the City of Austin and surrounding areas, but based on the UT Study and other data, it is likely to number in the thousands; only two percent of victims are identified; conditions which make individuals (particularly minors) vulnerable to trafficking are prevalent in Austin, including poverty, homelessness, runaways, history of sexual abuse, and domestic violence; and,

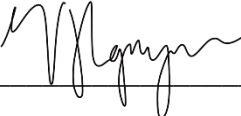
WHEREAS, it is a best practice to appoint a human trafficking liaison and/or task force independent of the police department; other cities have taken a multi-disciplinary approach (beyond law enforcement) to address human trafficking (e.g., [San Francisco](#)); the City of Houston and Mayor's Office appointed a Special Advisor and developed a Strategic Plan on Human Trafficking, and provides [coordinated action and resources](#); Atlanta, Chicago and Minneapolis have created similar advisory positions through grant funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission for Women recommends the following actions to reinforce and strengthen the commitment made by the City of Austin to address human trafficking in the resolution passed in March 2015:

- City of Austin adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to address Human Trafficking;
- City Manager appoint a Human Trafficking liaison, independent of law enforcement or other single entities (e.g., reporting to the City Manager or Mayor), to work with the Central Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking, City of Austin, community organizations and service providers;
- City of Austin provide training to all employees regarding how to recognize the signs of trafficking and identify potential human trafficking victims, and require more targeted and in-depth training for City employees (beyond law enforcement) who may engage directly with trafficking victims and high risk, vulnerable populations;
- City of Austin collaborate with human trafficking prevention experts to develop formal plans and policies which will prevent and reduce human trafficking related to all City tourism initiatives and City-sponsored events.

Date of Approval: September 11, 2019

Record of the vote: Unanimous on an 8-0 vote, two commissioners absent, one off dais

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

Vicky Nguyen, Staff Liaison