



## COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20200805-02Aii

Date: August 5, 2020

Subject: Victim Services

Motioned By: Rebecca Austen

Seconded By: Neva Fernandez

### 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; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2020 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20200622-03A1](#): Race and Gender Equity, addressing public safety reform including the funding and operating structure of Victim Services, and additional measures to support survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, on July 7, 2020, the Austin/Travis County Sexual Assault Response and Resource Team (SARRT) sent a letter to the City Manager, Mayor and City Council, objecting to Victims Services being moved out of the Austin Police Department (APD) and recommending increased authority for Victim Services within APD; and

WHEREAS, on July 9, 2020, The SAFE Alliance sent a Position on Police and Public Safety in the City of Austin to the City Manager and City Council, addressing the needs of victims and survivors of abuse and violence, and recommending increased authority and capacity for Victim Services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission recommends the following measures regarding public safety, policing and victim services.

- Victim/survivor voices must be part of the dialogue and decision process regarding public safety, policing and Victim Services.
- Victim Services must report at a level of city government that provides sufficient decision-making and funding authority.
- Regardless of reporting structures, Victim Services must co-locate with police officers and have continued access to APD crime data and reporting systems.

- Victims must have a voice in whether to have police officers present with Victim Services when they reach out to public safety; the type of crime should influence the involvement of officers (e.g., a report of rape after the fact can be supported by Victim Services without officers present, to avoid re-traumatizing the victim).
- Systems and services must support victims who choose not to prosecute as much as those who pursue prosecution.
- Social services, counseling and support to navigate the criminal justice system must be available to the accused as well as to victims; the accused are innocent until proven guilty, and may be experiencing trauma, mental illness, abuse, poverty, racism and other conditions which necessitate access to services.
- Individuals in law enforcement who commit or abet crimes of sexual assault, abuse, domestic violence and trafficking must be held accountable, and their victims must be protected as they seek justice.

Date of Approval: August 5, 2020

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 7-0 vote, with two commissioners absent, and two districts vacant.

Attest:                     *April E. Shaw*                      
April Shaw, Staff Liaison