



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Human Rights Commission

**Recommendation 20201026-002a**  
**Continued Funding for the Hotel Safety Net for survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Human Trafficking**

WHEREAS, the many victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, find themselves displaced and homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic,

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, previously full local emergency shelters serving victims; have had to cut their capacity to less than half to avoid infection risk and to ensure the safety of their staff and current residents,

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, calls to the COVID-19 Domestic Violence emergency response hotline has increased by 233% since its inception in April 2020,

WHEREAS, local law enforcement agencies are now able to place domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking agencies into immediate connection with housing and to provide food access and immediate incidentals for displaced and now homeless victims who have been turned away due to lessened emergency shelter capacity and long waitlists;

WHEREAS, local hotels across the city of Austin/Travis County and in the surrounding counties have built a “safety net” of hotels throughout the city for these displaced and now homeless victims as they transition out of their violence;

WHEREAS, these victims will now face chronic homelessness, food insecurity, increased unemployment, and the lack of safety and stability that comes with have an address;

WHEREAS, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 48% of those victims leaving their violence were being turned away from local shelters and now nearly 90% is being turned away per a 2019-2020 HHSE report from The Texas Council on Family Violence;

WHEREAS, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking should be considered public health concerns and become a permanent consideration for funding resources after the COVID-19 pandemic is deemed over;

WHEREAS, There is still a very high demand for the hotel safety net, resources and services provided during to the victims seeking support during COVID-19;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

1) Implore City Council and the City Manager to continue funding the hotel safety net and resources for victims experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The funding to this NOW ESSENTIAL and RELIED UPON Program going forward, will nurture the trust and relationship between local law enforcement, local referring agencies, and the victims themselves. The Hotel Safety Net has grown to 40 local hotels, providing them revenue to keep their doors open during this trying financial time, created by the loss in revenue and tourism dollars caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

2) Direct the city manager to diversify the funding to organizations that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. There is no one solution for domestic abuse, so no one organization should receive the funding to support victims. All branches and limbs of this work need to be watered and nourished so the Austinites we serve, can thrive.

Date of Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Record of the vote:

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