



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities

Recommendation Number 20210409-2B A Resolution Acknowledging Impacts of Winter Storm Uri on People with Disabilities

WHEREAS, Winter Storm Uri adversely impacted people with disabilities specifically because of our being people with disabilities;

WHEREAS, the pre-existing conditions of people with disabilities were either exacerbated by the extreme cold and/or a prolonged lack of access to necessary resources;

WHEREAS the prescription medications keeping us alive either were close to spoilage or running dangerously low, stores were closed, roads and sidewalks were icy, and proactively stocking up on these controlled substances is not legally permitted under federal law;

WHEREAS, local media has documented specific burdens which Winter Storm Uri especially imposed upon local people with disabilities such as needing to use car batteries to attempt to keep essential medical equipment properly and fully running;

WHEREAS, lack of readily accessible information updates prevented Deaf people from learning what had happened and what was occurring;

WHEREAS, Winter Storm Uri also created numerous specific resource barriers for the homeless community, several of whom have disabilities;

WHEREAS, several homeless individuals froze to death from hypothermia during Winter Storm Uri and the area shelters which were usually capable of providing essential social services instead also lacked sufficient winter insulation;

WHEREAS, several individuals with heart, kidney disease, and/or spinal cord injuries also had increased susceptibility to freezing temperatures specifically because of their disabilities;

WHEREAS an extended lack of functioning and accessible toilets throughout the City of Austin immediately following the post-storm power outage posed specific access, mobility and hygiene challenges for several people with disabilities;

WHEREAS a prolonged lack of easy and immediate local access to clean water resources impacts both the proper dosing of medication and effective hydration to safely manage chronic disabilities;

WHEREAS because of a combination of poverty, gentrification, and lack of accessibility, people with disabilities have limited resources to effectively withstand both the immediate and secondary effects of Winter Storm Uri and other natural disasters;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities is recommending that the City of Austin go on record acknowledging that ableism is a real, profound, and serious problem in our City which must be addressed by the City Council and City Managers;

AND BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities is recommending that a disability disaster office be established in Austin Water and Austin Energy to appropriately prioritize the Austin Texas disability community and our specific needs during large scale disasters and also the event aftermath;

AND BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities recommends that people with disabilities and our specific needs be fully integrated into all City of Austin emergency management response planning and training;

AND BE IT RESOLVED that the Equity Office be required to fully acknowledge and address ending ableism as a necessary component of successfully advancing and achieving equity throughout the City of Austin.

Date of Approval: 04/09/21

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 6-0 vote with Commissioners Gene Brooks and Taurean Burt and Joey Gidseg absent.

Attest: *David Ondich*

(Mayor's Committee for people with Disabilities City Staff Liaison)