

RESOLUTION NO. 20210422-059

WHEREAS, gun violence is a pressing public health issue; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to the safety, health, and welfare of all of its residents; and

WHEREAS, ensuring the safety of Austin residents, public safety officers, and visitors is a top City priority; and

WHEREAS, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that gun violence in the United States is at epidemic levels, claiming over 30,000 lives annually; and

WHEREAS, the epidemic of gun violence includes horrific events such as mass shootings, intimate partner and domestic violence, suicides, homicides, accidental firearm discharge; and

WHEREAS, gun injuries to children are preventable, and safe firearm storage can reduce the risk of youth suicide and unintentional firearm injuries; counseling, advice, and education for healthcare professionals and for parents to keep their children safe must include limited access to weapons; and

WHEREAS, a study of teen suicides by firearm found that most were carried out with firearms from the adolescent's home, and more than 75 percent of firearms used in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or friend; and

WHEREAS, prevention of violence occurs along a continuum that begins in early childhood with programs to help parents raise emotionally healthy children and ends with efforts to identify and intervene with troubled individuals who are threatening violence; and

WHEREAS, firearm prohibitions for high-risk groups – domestic violence offenders, persons convicted of violent misdemeanor crimes, and individuals with mental illness who have been adjudicated as being a threat to themselves or to others – have been shown to reduce violence; and

WHEREAS, in August 2019, City Council approved the creation of a Gun Violence Task Force to advise the Council on potential actions the City can take to reduce gun violence at the local level and to make recommendations for enhancing existing resources and campaigns; and

WHEREAS, in July 2020, the Gun Violence Task Force released their final report, which included various recommendations including the creation of an Office of Violence Prevention; and

WHEREAS, in August 2020, City Council approved funding of an Office of Violence Prevention that will focus on community-led solutions for people and neighborhoods consistently plagued by violence; and

WHEREAS, in March 2021, Austin Public Health requested applications from qualified social service providers (Applicants) to manage the city-owned domestic violence shelter and provide supportive services, housing assistance, and direct client assistance (RFA #003 Domestic Violence Shelter - 2021 NPS); and

WHEREAS, in April 2021, Austin Police Department Interim Chief Joe Chacon announced a new initiative to combat local gun violence; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Police Department has reported an increase in gun violence and cited that many of the firearms used in these crimes were obtained illegally; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, in 2011, firearms were the number one cause of death for police officers killed in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, during the 116th and the 117th Congress, House Resolution 8 (H.R. 8) was approved on a bipartisan basis in the United States House of Representatives to require background checks for all commercial gun sales; and

WHEREAS, approval of H.R. 8, marked the first time major gun safety legislation has passed the United States House of Representatives in more than twenty years; and

WHEREAS, since H.R. 8 was passed by the United States House of Representatives in the 116th and the 117th Congress, the United States Senate has not debated or voted on this important legislation; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that 99.85 percent of Americans will know a victim of gun violence and 54 percent of U.S. gun owners admit that they do not store their guns safely; nearly 1,300 children in the United States die from gun-related injuries every year; and nationally, occupational homicide by shooting has increased steadily since 2011; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the daily scourge of gun violence, Texas has suffered numerous mass acts of gun violence including on August 3, 2019 in El Paso, Texas where 23 individuals were killed and 23 people were injured by a shooter who allegedly uploaded an online manifesto describing a so-called "Hispanic invasion of Texas," and referencing inspiration from the attack on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand that left 51 dead and 40 injured; and

WHEREAS, after the May 18, 2018, shooting at Santa Fe High School, in Santa Fe, Texas, where 10 people were killed and 13 injured, Texas Governor Greg Abbott met with superintendents, administrators, law enforcement officials, as well as survivors of gun violence, to discuss policies that could increase the safety of schools and communities while preserving Second Amendment rights; and

WHEREAS, on May 30, 2018, Texas Governor Greg Abbott released a School and Firearm Safety Action Plan, which included a recommendation encouraging the Texas Senate and House leaders to consider the merits of adopting "extreme risk protection order" laws, also known as "red flag laws," allowing law enforcement, a family member, a school employee, or a district attorney to file a petition seeking the removal of firearms from a potentially dangerous person only after legal due process is provided; and

WHEREAS, Texas Governor Greg Abbott's School and Firearm Safety Action Plan described the red flag laws as a proposal which could have been used to prevent the shootings at Sutherland Springs and at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; and

WHEREAS, on average over 3,350 gun-related deaths occur in Texas each year; and

WHEREAS, in October of 2019, Everytown for Gun Safety, the country's largest gun violence prevention organization, released the report, "Guns and Intimate Partner Violence: America's Uniquely Lethal Intimate Partner Violence Problem," and found that in at least 54 percent of mass shootings the perpetrator shot a current or former intimate partner or family member; and

WHEREAS, the report also found that between 2009 and 2018, 80 percent of child victims of mass shootings died in incidents connected to domestic or family violence; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2019 report, "Uniform Crime Reporting Program: Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) 2014-2018," every month, an average of 53 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner and nearly 1 million women alive today have reported being shot or shot at by intimate partners; and

WHEREAS, during the 86th Legislative Session the Texas House and Senate did not approve important gun safety legislation consistent with Texas Governor Greg Abbott's 2018 School and Firearm Safety Action Plan and adjourned without taking sufficient action to reduce the risk of gun violence in our schools and communities; and

WHEREAS, local organizations, including Texas Gun Sense and local chapters of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, have advocated at the Texas Legislature for sensible gun safety legislation; and

WHEREAS, during the 87th Texas Legislature, the Texas House passed HB 1927 which would eliminate the requirement for Texans to get a license to carry a firearm if they are not already prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearm; and

WHEREAS, City Council has taken extensive action to address the epidemic of gun violence including Resolution No. 20130228-035 signifying City Council's intent to endorse efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing gun crime as well as Resolution Nos. 20161215-064, 20171207-054, 20180510-047, 20190808-149, and 20190822-069; and

WHEREAS, Austin has continued to experience the daily toll of gun violence, including events such as the January 27th, 2021 fatal shooting of a local pediatrician, the non-fatal shooting involving a law enforcement officer on April 9th, 2021, and the fatal shooting of three individuals in Austin, Texas on April 18th, 2021; and

WHEREAS, public health policy and laws that reduce traffic and occupational injuries and

fatalities are outstanding examples that may be easily adapted to firearm issues to reduce harm; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

City Council implores the state and federal governments to immediately take emergency action to end gun violence and address the associated public health and public safety crisis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council calls on Texas Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Legislature to advance proposals included in Governor Abbott's own 2018 School and Firearm Safety Action Plan, including the adoption of an "extreme risk protection order" law that protects the lives of Texans and is consistent with the 2nd Amendment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council calls on the Texas Senate to protect and preserve our existing statewide requirements to require a license to carry a handgun; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council calls on the United States Senate to immediately begin debate and deliberation on H.R. 8 and other meaningful gun safety legislation that has been approved by the United States House of Representatives and remains languishing in the Senate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

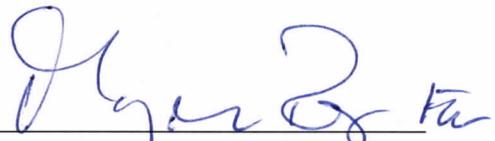
City Council directs the City Manager to ensure the appropriate staff are engaged with Travis County elected officials, Travis County staff, the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force, and any other relevant entities on the implementation and improvement of firearm surrender protocols in Travis County and surrounding counties and to report back to Council on the status of those efforts and whether any improvements can be made to those protocols within the next 90 days; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council directs the City Manager to send a copy of this Resolution to the Texas delegation of the United States Congress and to the White House; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council directs the City Manager to send a copy of Governor Abbott's School and Firearm Safety Action Plan along with a copy of this Resolution to the Travis, Williamson, and Hays County delegation of the Texas House and Senate, the Texas Governor, the Texas Lieutenant Governor, and to the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

ADOPTED: April 22 , 2021 **ATTEST:** 
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk