



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Mayor's Committee for People With Disabilities

Recommendation Number 20210827-002D: Downtown Mental Health Diversion Program

WHEREAS, mental illness is not a crime, but the ongoing lack of accessible affordable, and culturally appropriate local treatment options frequently has left people locked up inside a jail cell;

WHEREAS, both this defacto criminalizing people with mental health issues and allowing the homeless to lay on sidewalks were inadequate and inappropriate public policies;

WHEREAS, law enforcement dislikes being relegated to defacto mental health care providers for individuals who are in need of effective culturally appropriate mental health care treatment options;

WHEREAS, this committee repeatedly has pressed the City to actively address ableism as a critical and necessary component for obtaining and then maintaining an equitable society;

WHEREAS ableism is not a 'lesser' form of discrimination within the City of Austin;

WHEREAS, ableism must be formally prohibited in all City of Austin offices, departments, and programs to achieve equity;

WHEREAS, Austin Police Department Interim Police Chief Joseph Chacon, Travis County District Attorney Jose Garza, and Travis County Attorney Delia Garza have all already expressed public support for establishing a Mental Health Diversion Center;

WHEREAS, a Mental Health Diversion Center should not prosecute people with disabilities who are in need of mental health care and/or substance abuse issues;

WHEREAS, a Mental Health Diversion Center was proposed specifically to help people with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues;

WHEREAS, this proposed Mental Health Diversion Center must be culturally inclusive and refrain from promoting ableist stereotypes about people with disabilities within the City of Austin;

WHEREAS mental illness and substance abuse are already recognized as disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act;

WHEREAS, the Mental Health Diversion Center should be collaboratively planned and funded like the City of Austin Texas is in fact now America's 10th largest City;

WHEREAS proper initial and subsequent planning and funding of community resources demonstrates people with disabilities are full and valued members of the community,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities recommends that the City of Austin endorse the collaborative establishment of a Mental Health Diversion Center as a means of effectively and permanently addressing mental health and addiction in Austin-Travis County without criminalizing people with disabilities, including people with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues.

Date of Approval: August 27, 2021

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____ *Jonathan Babiak*

Jonathan Babiak, Staff Liaison