



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Early Childhood Council

20211110-002aiii: Addressing the need for improvement in early childcare in Austin

WHEREAS, the high cost of living and operating in Austin has been straining the childcare industry for years, even before COVID-19, making the operation of high-quality childcare in Austin nearly impossible; and

WHEREAS, for many years, much of Austin has fallen into a category best described as a "High quality Child-Care Desert¹," where demand for affordable high-quality childcare far exceeds available options; and

WHEREAS, despite significant investments of local relief funding, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the already under-resourced and fragile childcare industry in Austin; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Strategic Direction identifies equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education as a priority under Economic Mobility and Affordability with the number and percentage of children enrolled in quality Early Childhood Education programs (as evidenced by meeting Texas Rising Star criteria) metric as one of the Council's top 10 indicators; and

WHEREAS, young children in the City of Austin who are unable attend high-quality programs and public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic may carry the consequences of that gap in support for years to come and may need intensive supports to close gaps in academic and cognitive development quickly when the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved; and

WHEREAS, legislation passed through the U.S. House of Representatives, and currently under review in the Senate (colloquially known as the "Build Back Better" reconciliation bill) would dramatically increase funding for child care and Pre-K.

WHEREAS, the state of Texas would receive funding through this initiative based on an allotment determined by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act. Ultimately, over the life of

¹ <https://childrenatrisk.org/childcaresdesertmap/> A TRS4 Star Child Care Desert refers to an area where there are less than 35 TRS4 Level child care seats for 100 children of working parents.

this legislation, Texas would be required to provide matching funds, and as such, Texas may "opt out" of this program.

WHEREAS, if the state of Texas does not "opt-in" to receive these funds, the proposal only provides for limited, competitive grants that cities and counties could apply for, in relatively small proportion compared to the full funding that states would receive if they "opt-in" to the program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council encourages the Austin City Council to direct state lobbying efforts to petition the state for adoption of both the federal child care funds and the related Universal Pre-K funds that are also included in this legislation. And that the City Council further direct city staff to make contingency plans for securing funds in FY2023-FY2027 through competitive grants if the state of Texas does not "opt-in" to this funding.

Date of Approval: _____

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____

DRAFT