

DRAFT

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR A MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION CENTER

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

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

WHEREAS, law enforcement dislike 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; and

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

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

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

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; and

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

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

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

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; and

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