



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20220302-02d: Women Experiencing Homelessness

Date: March 2, 2022

Subject: Women Experiencing Homelessness

Motioned By: Rebecca Austen

Seconded By: Flannery Bope

Recommendation to Council

Whereas, the Commission for Women (“Commission”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council (“Council”) and City Manager to prioritize women’s quality of life, so that Austin becomes the most equitable city in the nation for women and girls; and

Whereas, women and female-identifying persons (hereafter referenced as “women”) may be more vulnerable and less safe while experiencing homelessness; these risks are amplified for those with children; these women and children are often considered “hidden” - rather than living on the streets, they may be sleeping in cars, hotels, or shelters, or moving from one place to another with friends or family; and

Whereas, being unhoused causes interrelated issues with poverty, access to stable housing, employment, child care, schooling, and family life; according to a presentation from Saint Louise House to the Commission working group on August 4, 2021, 84% of homeless families are led by women, 53% of these mothers lack a high school diploma, and 92% have experienced abuse; and

Whereas, women with or without children who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and any other form of sexual violence or trauma are at a greater risk; and

Whereas, the capacity of short or long-term shelters and temporary/transitional housing for women and families is limited, and exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions; shelters and temporary facilities may also lack services tailored to the specific needs of women and families; and

Whereas, the Saint Louise House is a viable solution to help those in need; their mission as a nonprofit organization is dedicated to the success of women and their children moving from homelessness to healthy independent lives, striving to empower women and their children to

overcome homelessness for generations to come; their proven program provides stable housing and wraparound services with highly-individualized support that fosters education, financial literacy, strong family relationships and healthy living, leading to a lifetime of self-sufficiency; and

Whereas, since the Saint Louise House was founded in Austin in 2000, there have been 205 families served, 448 children served with 100% moving to the next grade level, and 90% of the women increasing self-sufficiency; in 2020 there were 54 families with 125 children served, 12 successful graduations, 15 families moved out of homelessness into Saint Louise House, and even with COVID-19, 80% of families continued to make progress toward self-sufficiency; and

Whereas, the need for housing and services such as those provided by Saint Louise House exceeds current capacity, with waiting lists for families needing guidance and assistance; and

Whereas, the Commission for Women passed [Recommendation 20210203-04b](#): Continued Funding for the Hotel Safety Net for Survivors on February 3, 2021, to continue funding the hotel safety net and resources for victims experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and directing the City Manager to diversify the funding to organizations that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, to address their unique needs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission for Women recommends for the FY2022-2023 budget, the City of Austin:

- 1) Support the Saint Louise House to increase capacity and services, such as through partnerships with the City to acquire access to additional land and/or facilities at reduced cost, to serve more women and families experiencing homelessness and help them transition to independence;
- 2) Continue to fund the Hotel Safety Net and/or comparable programs to provide safe and timely housing and services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking;
- 3) Continue to fund programs such as SAFE's shelter and wrap-around services such as Bridge to Safety for victims of sexual violence;
- 4) Fund affordable, flexible, quality child care programs that specifically address the needs of unhoused families.

Date of Approval: March 2, 2022

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 7-0 vote, with two commissioners absent.

Attest: Jonathan Babiak
Jonathan Babiak, Staff Liaison