



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)
BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS ON AFFORDABILITY
RECOMMENDATION #: 20220323-005a**

Date: March 23, 2022

Subject: JIC Endorsements - Recommendations for Affordability

Motioned By: Karen Crawford

Seconded By: Vincent Cobalis

JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFFORDABILITY

VOTE

For: Amanda Afifi, Vincent Cobalis, Raul Alvarez, Karen Crawford, Rebecca Austen, Charles Curry, Amy Temperley, Robin Orlowski.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Jamarr Brown & Gregory Smith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza

DESCRIPTION:

The Joint Inclusion Committee unanimously endorsed the following recommendation submitted by member Commissions. These recommendations address critical issues in affordability that uniquely affects the quality of life for diverse communities represented from each commission member of the Joint Inclusion Committee.

- LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220328-3A-2:** Safe & Affordable Housing
- Commission on Seniors, **Recommendation Number 20220309-04Cvi:** Rental and Utility Assistance for Older Adults
- Early Childhood Council, **Recommendation Number 20220309-3a:** Maintain Early Childhood Funding
- Commission on Immigrant Affairs, **Recommendation Number 20220307-2d2:** Increase in Legal Services Funding
- Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Commission, **Recommendation 20220322-3aii:** Expanding Funding for Immigrant Legal Services
- Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission, **Recommendation 20220328-004c6:** Immigrant Legal Services

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has used tax supported bond proceeds to incentivize the development of affordable housing and has entered into contracts with selected developers to achieve this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the developer contracts create additional obligations on developers regarding tenant selection and rental rates; and

WHEREAS, there is a public interest in ensuring that the resulting affordable housing be equally available to all those qualified on an income basis regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, familial status, disability, marital status, student status, creed, national origin, or source of income; and

WHEREAS, access to affordable housing also means that residents must be able to live there free from discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, familial status, disability, marital status, student status, creed, national origin, or source of income; and

WHEREAS, public comments at town hall meetings have indicated a perception that the City's affordable housing efforts have not adequately addressed diversity, inclusion and respect for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission recommends to City Council that:

- Tax supported affordable housing development contracts include language that requires tenant application and selection processes to convey that affordable housing is supportive to all regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, familial status, disability, marital status, student status, creed, national origin, or source of income; and
- That annual reporting of complete demographic information regarding the tenant application and selection process be required of developers and made available by the City to the community to support the perception of diversity, inclusion and respect with regard to the City's affordable housing efforts.

Attest:



Ryn Gonzales, Chair

Recommendation:

Expand funding for rental and utility assistance for all; and unlink rental payments for older adults from calculations based on median family income.

Description of Recommendation to Council:

The Commission on Seniors recommends increasing funding for rental and utility assistance funding and programs for all, including older adults and discontinue basing rental payments for older adults on area median family income.

Background and Rationale:

Agencies serving older adults report that they are receiving an increased number of requests for rental and utility assistance. Austin is facing an unprecedented housing crisis as rent and utility costs increase. This has an even greater impact on older adults who are living on fixed incomes such as social security. A recent study, which compares the growth in the Social Security cost of living adjustments with increases in the costs of goods and services typically used by retirees, found that since 2000 Social Security benefits have lost 32% of their buying power.¹

Housing costs and rents continue to increase exponentially in Austin. As noted in the City of Austin Comprehensive Market analysis for 2020.²

- Austin’s median rent increased 38% from 2010
- Naturally occurring (market-rate) affordable rentals continued to decline

Additional funds are needed to support older adults who may be at high risk for homelessness due to these increasing costs.

Housing costs were cited as concerns of residents during the budget townhalls held by the Joint Inclusion Committee member commissions. An older adult from the Mueller neighborhood noted that affordable housing supported by the city base qualifications, and rent, on area median family income. However, median family income in Austin continues to rise at a much higher rate than social security or other retirement plans. The Commission on Seniors supports the request to no longer base rent increases for older adults on changes to area median family income.

Attest: 
Janeé Briesemeister, Chair of the Commission on Seniors

¹ <https://www.thestreet.com/retirement/social-securitys-cola-raise-cant-keep-up-with-inflation>

² https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Austin%20HMA_final.pdf

WHEREAS, in the City of Austin only 36% of children under age 4 living in households with low-income are receiving any early learning services at all; and

WHEREAS, 90% of these children age birth to 4 are children of color; and

Whereas, decades of research prove that disadvantages begin the moment children come into the world because children born into poverty and children of color are disproportionately born early, at low-birth- weight, or with chronic illnesses, and are less likely than their peers to be ready for, or successful at school; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the early childhood sector in Texas with an estimated loss of 22% of the state child care supply, as well as disproportionate impact on communities of color in Austin; and

WHEREAS, current City investments in early childhood programs align with the goals and strategies of the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Strategic Plan - a robust, data-driven community strategic plan designed to coordinate efforts, improve child and family outcomes as well as build more efficient and coordinated systems for equitable access; and

WHEREAS, the investments align with the City of Austin Strategic Direction Strategic EOA.10: "Create equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) by supporting families who do not qualify for existing free programs and cannot afford quality programs on their own, increasing availability of quality ECE programs, and encouraging living wages for ECE providers"; and

WHEREAS, these investments also align with the Strategic Anchors of SD 2023 including equity, affordability, sustainability and resiliency, proactive prevention and community trust and relationships;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council recommends that the City of Austin maintain all current investments in early childhood programs and infrastructure including but not limited to:

- Social Service Contracts
- Staffing (2 FTE) positions specifically for early childhood through Austin Public Health
- Leases for city-funded early childhood facilities
- Essential infrastructure such as Family Connects and WIC programs that specifically serve families with young children prenatal to age 5.

Attest: 
Caitlin Oliver, Staff Liaison

WHEREAS, we heard from the community that legal services funding is crucial, and there is still unmet need; and

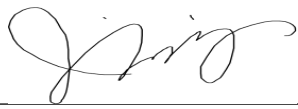
WHEREAS, there are immigrants who need access to counsel, and cannot afford attorneys. This is especially so for immigrants facing removal proceedings; and

WHEREAS, in a time of changes in immigration policy, people have more need of legal representation, as it has become very complicated, and it is essential that immigrant communities obtain accurate advice and assistance; and

WHEREAS, the people most impacted by the complicated changes in immigration policy are low-income immigrants; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin already funds legal services for low income immigrants who are Austin residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Immigrant Affairs recommends that we increase funding for immigration legal services.

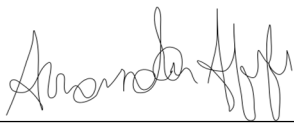
Attest:  _____
Estephanie Olivares, Staff Liaison

Recommendation to Council:

Increase Austin Public Health’s funding for pro bono and low bono immigration legal services.

Background and Rationale:

We continue to hear from the community concerns regarding underfunding of immigration legal services. Only a small number of individuals are served with the current funding. There are very few organizations in Austin that have the ability to provide legal services to our immigrant communities pro bono. One of the service providers is American Gateways. They are currently only able to meet 25% of the need. The need for legal services continues to expand due to the complicated immigration legal system.

Attest:  _____
Amanda Afifi, Chair

Description:

The AAQoL Advisory Commission would like to recommend that the City increase funding for immigrant legal services.

Travis County is experiencing an urgent need for immigrant legal services for low-income immigrants. The latest US Census data shows that 17.8% of the total population of Travis County is foreign born. Many of these individuals are low-income and do not have full legal status. Stress, fear, and heightened anxiety are constant companions for those in the immigrant community without legal status. Anxiety regarding deportation, family separation, and securing gainful employment are widespread concerns.

Although many of these immigrants have a pathway to legal immigration status, they do not have the ability to secure it. Navigating a complex and opaque immigration system to secure legal status is often impossible without legal assistance and is cost-prohibitive to many low-income Austin/Travis County residents.

Funding is needed to provide dedicated immigrant legal services to low-income Asian immigrants and others in Austin to address the large number of individuals seeking services for deportation defense and consultations. The immigrant Asian population in Austin is diverse and has specific language access needs, and, without additional funding, low-income individuals will not be able to access the protection and services they need. Additional ongoing funding in the amount of \$100,000 would provide 50 one-on-one consultations to Asian immigrants as well as take on full representation of one new immigrant case per month. Outreach and education to the immigrant community could also be increased by five additional events.

Cost is \$100,000 ongoing.

Department:

APH

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities:

Safety & Fair Administration of Justice.

Attest: Jeremy Garza
Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison