



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Early Childhood Council

20220914-6: Fully Implementing Fee Waivers for High-Quality Affordable Early Child Care Centers

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

WHEREAS, 90% of these children aged birth to 4 are children of color; 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 a disproportionate impact on communities of color in Austin; and

WHEREAS, in September 2017, Council resolution 20170928-057 created 12 deliverables related to child care; and

WHEREAS, Austin Public Health, after convening a workgroup of early childhood stakeholders, developed and sent to Council in April of 2018 the High Quality Child Care and Pre-K 3 Report Response to Council Resolution No. 20170928-057, which included fourteen considerations to support the child care sector and improve access to affordable, high-quality early care and education; and

WHEREAS, one of the considerations in the High Quality Child Care and Pre-K 3 Report - Policy Consideration 1 – was to explore waiving City of Austin fees assessed for high quality child care centers; and

WHEREAS, a Memorandum dated April 12, 2019, to the Mayor and Council Members from the Development Services and Planning and Zoning departments in response to Resolution No. 20181004-036 outlined options for fee waivers for Council consideration, including annual fees collected by Austin Public Health and the Austin Fire Department, and project-specific development process fees assessed when opening or expanding a child care center; and

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2019, Mayor and Council amended Chapter 10-3 of the City Code relating to food enterprise permits to exempt qualified high quality child care that accept child care subsidies from paying food permit fees (Ordinance No. 20190131-017), and on that date also approved an ordinance to

exempt those child care centers from the general environment/licensing inspection fee and food establishment fee (Ordinance No. 20190131-016); and

WHEREAS, during the May 11, 2022, regular meeting, the City of Austin Early Childhood Council received an update on the status of all considerations to Council that were included in the April 2018 High Quality Child Care and Pre-K 3 Report Response to Council Resolution No. 20170928-057, and found that waivers for Austin Fire Department fees and development services fees have not yet been put in place for affordable, high-quality child care programs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council encourages the Austin City Council to direct staff to implement waivers of annual Austin Fire Department fees and project-specific development services fees for high-quality licensed child care programs (those accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Accreditation Commission for the Early Care and Education Programs, or have a four-star rating from the Texas Rising Star program) that serve children accept child care subsidies.

Date of approval: September 14, 2022

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 9 – 0 vote

Attest: 