



RECOMMENDATION  
**Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities**

Recommendation Number 20230310-5: The Pre-Existing City of Austin MBWE Program  
Is Amended and Expanded To Include Disability

WHEREAS, the City of Austin wants to encourage minority-owned small business enterprise participation; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin headquarters the Texas School for the Deaf, and is the largest school specifically for Deaf people in the State of Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Service Disabled Veteran program previously launched on October 1, 2017 is explicitly restricted to program participation of only those business owners who received disability specifically as a result of having served in the United States Military, and therefore systematically excludes business owners who have had disabilities either since birth, or acquired disabilities after discharge from military service; and

WHEREAS, The City of Austin has a vibrant local Deaf culture including 61 locally-owned businesses which are currently both owned and operated by Deaf individuals; and

WHEREAS, several of these Deaf-owned businesses proactively and independently formed an Austin, Texas-based Deaf Chamber of Commerce with 13 active members, and

WHEREAS, current Federal eligibility evaluation criteria from the Small Business Administration does encourage disability to be publicly recognized as a category in the "Small Disadvantaged Business" programs; and

WHEREAS, the cities of Houston, Philadelphia, and Boston already explicitly mention "disability" in their respective MBWE program eligibility criteria, operations, and publication; and

WHEREAS, local business owners with disabilities in Austin, Texas do not receive similar inclusion, participation and related benefits from the pre-existing City of Austin MBWE program; and

WHEREAS, local business owners with disabilities in Austin Texas have the right to expect full inclusion and participation, and benefits from all existing City of Austin, Texas programs; and

WHEREAS, excluding local business owners with disabilities from full access, inclusion, participation, and benefits of City of Austin, Texas MBWE program criteria and operations is neither inclusion nor equity; and

WHEREAS, The City of Austin, Texas MBWE program and City of Austin itself is funded with public monies including from these local business owners with disabilities who do have the right to expect full and equitable access within existing City of Austin programs; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities recommends that the existing City of Austin MBWE program is amended and expanded to explicitly include disability as a category in all eligibility, program operations, and publications;

AND THEREFORE, all MBWE program staff must undergo required annual comprehensive anti-ableism/anti-audism training to understand that ableism and audism undercut the achievement of equity in Austin, Texas;

AND THEREFORE, successfully completing this required annual comprehensive anti-ableism/anti-audism training helps all MBWE program staff effectively create and sustain an inclusive and equitable Austin, Texas for small business owners and prospective small business owners with disabilities;

AND THEREFORE, the Austin City Council pass a concurrent resolution apologizing for having previously excluded taxpayers with disabilities and/or Deafness from full inclusion and participation in existing small disadvantaged business programs.

Date of Approval: Friday, March 10, 2023

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 6-0 vote

Attest: 

(Staff Liaison, Jacquelyn Alexander)

For: Chair Jonathan Franks, Deborah Trejo, Robin Orlowski, Kathryn Broadwater, Jennifer S. Powell, and Micheal Fetonte.