

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, before COVID, about 20% of the Travis County jail population were identified as having a serious mental health condition and now about 41%, representing 880 inmates, are identified as having a serious mental health condition; and

WHEREAS, approximately 75% of all arrests were for misdemeanors, often for nonviolent, mental health-related disorder behaviors; and

WHEREAS, in May 2022, the Travis County Commissioners Court partnered with Dell Medical School for the Travis County Forensic Mental Health Project to find solutions for those in Travis County jails in need of care for mental health or substance use issues; and

WHEREAS, the project incorporated lead stakeholders, including people with lived experiences, mental health and legal experts, judicial leaders, and law enforcement and community advocates in a 10-month solution-driven process to create actionable recommendations to address these complex issues; and

WHEREAS, the report estimated between 64 and 136 people might be eligible for diversion every month and recommended a facility able to accommodate anywhere from 32 to 70 beds; and

WHEREAS, increasing diversion efforts could not only help with the growing population at the local jail, but could help with the long waitlist at the state hospital that is used to restore competency for people who are involved in the criminal justice system; and

23 **WHEREAS**, the Texas Commission on Mental Health and Texas Health
24 and Human Services Commission released an “Eliminate the Wait” toolkit that
25 noted over the past two decades, there has been a 38% increase in the number of
26 people found incompetent to stand trial; and

27 **WHEREAS**, the competency restoration service is a temporary and
28 narrowly focused rehabilitation effort that does not create a treatment plan for
29 long-term recovery and rejoining the community; and

30 **WHEREAS**, the process is inefficient, and people found incompetent to
31 stand trial may be restored and return to jail, only to mentally deteriorate again
32 before their case concludes; and

33 **WHEREAS**, county and city officials, working with other community
34 partners, play a critical role in funding, implementing, and coordinating a local
35 continuum of care to support people in mental health and substance use disorder
36 crises; and

37 **WHEREAS**, Council adopted Resolution No. 20210729-174 stating its
38 interest in and support of Travis County's initiative to study the opportunities of a
39 mental health diversion pilot program with the Austin/Travis County Sobering
40 Center (Sobering Center); and

41 **WHEREAS**, Council adopted Resolution No. 20190620-184, which
42 included direction to the City Manager to expand existing models of non-
43 criminalized connection to services by first responders, such as the Sobering
44 Center and Downtown Austin Community Court, in addition to exploring the use
45 of Houston's mental health jail diversion models of non-criminalized connection to
46 services by first responders; and

47 **WHEREAS**, Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (EMCOT) was
48 established in 2013 and provides the crisis services and crisis relapse prevention
49 services array through first responders dispatches and requests for services; and

50 **WHEREAS**, from 2015 to 2018, all Austin Police Department calls for
51 service that included EMCOT engagement yielded jail diversion rates at 98% or
52 99%, emergency detention diversion from 88% to 93%, and hospital diversion
53 rates from 76% to 81% when Emergency Medical Services engaged EMCOT; and

54 **WHEREAS**, Integral Care, Travis County's local mental health authority,
55 operates The Inn, a 16-bed facility that provides short-term crisis support for up to
56 seven days for adults recovering from a mental health crisis; and

57 **WHEREAS**, The Inn saved the local health care system between \$1.87
58 million and \$2.82 million annually from 2017 to 2019 when compared with the
59 same treatment and length of stay in a hospital setting; and

60 **WHEREAS**, on March 21, 2023, Travis County passed a resolution to
61 implement the recommendations from the forensic mental health project conducted
62 by Dell Medical School which includes the creation of a Travis County Diversion
63 Center; and

64 **WHEREAS**, Travis County's resolution seeks to identify funding options,
65 including through partnerships with the Travis County Hospital District, Central
66 Health, CommUnity Care, Integral Care, City, and state and federal partners, and
67 directs staff to report back to the Travis County Commissioners Court within 180
68 days; and

69 **WHEREAS**, Travis County’s resolution directs staff to provide
70 recommendations for a program design that will inform the design and
71 construction of the Diversion Center within 120 days; and

72 **WHEREAS**, on April 20, 2023, the Travis County Commissioners Court
73 will allocate Travis County's remaining Local Fiscal Recovery Funds; **NOW**,
74 **THEREFORE**,

75 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

76 The City Manager is directed to explore the feasibility of an interlocal
77 agreement with Travis County, Integral Care, and the Austin/Travis County
78 Sobriety Center Local Government Corporation for the development of a new
79 Austin/Travis County Diversion Center that includes requirements for governance
80 and sustainable funding.

81 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

82 The City Manager is directed to work with Travis County and Integral Care
83 to identify the financial resources necessary to partner in developing a pilot for
84 mental health diversion services and a bridge housing program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide regular updates to the Public Health Committee and provide a report to Council regarding the status of these directives by September 1, 2023.

ADOPTED: _____, 2023 **ATTEST:** _____
Myrna Rios
City Clerk