



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)
FY23-2024 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION 20230322-016
AFFORDABILITY PRIORITY – GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAM**

Date: March 22, 2023

Subject: Joint Endorsement of the Hispanic/Latino Quality-of-Life Resource Advisory Commission’s FY23-24 Budget Recommendation 20230328-010: Guaranteed Income Program (JIC Affordability Priority)

Motioned by: Commissioner Hanna Huang Seconded By: Commissioner Raul Alvarez

HISPANIC/LATINO QUALITY-OF-LIFE RESOURCE ADISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
20230328-010

JOINTLY ENDORSED RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL ON FY23-2024 BUDGET

The Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) collectively endorses the Hispanic/Latino Quality-of-Life Resource Advisory Commission’s recommendation on renewing the Guaranteed Income program pilot. With the increased cost of living, affordability is an issue that continues to come up year after year. Affordability was the most common issue expressed by residents at all three Quality of Life Townhalls, and people continue to see increases in rent and housing costs. Guaranteed income offers more flexible access to housing support, accords more choice and dignity, reduces discrimination, and offers more efficient and cost-effective housing. The current pilot shows funds are primarily helping Latino/a/x and Black families in the Eastern crescent. Gentrification has pushed families out of the areas they have been living in, some for generations. These funds help keep people in their communities. Additionally, the program is also helping families whose communication is in a language other than English. Spanish was the second most common language requested on enrollment forms.

Description of Recommendation to Council:

- Expand funding for Guaranteed Income programs.
- Develop and open an application to residents not currently involved and/or served by programs receiving current funds. Eligibility criteria includes:
 - Live within the City of Austin and Travis County limits;
 - Have a household income that is at or below 60% of the Area Median Family Income;

- Did not receive funding through UpTogether’s previous 12-month pilot from March 2021-March 2022; and
- Meet at least one of the following:
 - Moving from homelessness toward permanent housing.
 - Have a filed eviction.
 - Household has been behind on rent for 2 or more months over the past year; and/or
 - Household has received a verbal or written notice of intent to evict OR a threat to vacate by landlord or property manager at any time within the past 3 months due to nonpayment of rent.
- Determine City staff point of contact for the Guaranteed Income program.

Rationale:

According to findings from a recent brief from the Urban Institute titled *Guaranteed Income as a Mechanism for Promoting Housing Stability*, unrestricted cash investment (including guaranteed income) addresses gaps and deficits in policies designed to address America’s housing affordability crisis. The brief reported, “Insights from a research review and policymaker interviews suggest that strategically applied cash relief could accomplish the following:

1. Offer renters facing one-time or intermittent housing shocks more flexible access to housing support.
2. Accord more choice and dignity to any renter in need of housing support.
3. Reduce exposure to voucher discrimination and offer more housing choices to marginalized populations.
4. Provide increased housing access to excluded workers.
5. Offer more efficient and cost-effective housing help to those in urgent need now.”

According to UpTogether’s Central Texas 12-Month Pilot of the Strength-Based Approach: Final Report, “Between July 2021 and March 2022 members decreased their reliance on government subsidies. Fewer members applied for subsidies, vouchers, or other similar housing assistance (from 27% to 19%). The percentage of members receiving any type of government housing assistance was cut by half (16% to 8%).” Cash is an efficient and equitable form of housing assistance. UpTogether uncovered on a previous report that only 16% of members were receiving housing assistance. Some of the highlighted barriers members faced when applying or receiving other types of government assistance included long waiting periods before receiving subsidies, too many requirements, or encountering a benefits cliff. The Final Report also showed not having to worry about eviction or next month’s rent payment reduced stress and allowed families to focus on goal attainment instead of short-term survival.

In May 2022, the City of Austin approved a \$1.18 million guaranteed income pilot with UpTogether using general funds. In approving the pilot, the City Council directed that it should

emphasize areas of key priority to the City in the selection process including homelessness and displacement, as they consider this approach as a way to impact outcomes in these areas. Ten community organizations, selected for their existing relationships with the primary audience, identified the 135 households in August 2022. Households received their first payment in September 2022. A final findings report with fact sheets will be published in the Summer 2024.

Information from the City of Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot Status Update dated February 2023 includes demographic information for those in the pilot:

	City of Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot Members	Austin
	n=115	
White (not Hispanic)	5%	48%
Latino/a/x	38%	33%
Black	35%	8%
Asian	11%	8%
Communication in language other than English*	34%	12%

***Note:** Spanish was the second most common language requested on enrollment forms, with 22% of participants. Besides English and Spanish, communications were requested in Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Dari, French, Karen, Nepali, and Pashto; however, none of these languages had more than two respondents requested.

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of City of Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot member enrollment form data and American Community Survey, 2015-2019

Additionally, information was broken down by Council District and Zip Code. Out of 115 families, 12% reside in 78741, 10% in 78753, and 10% in 78744. Out of 67 families, 24% reside in District 1, 16% in District 2, 18% in District 3, and 19% in District 4.

The current pilot includes 135 households; however, this is not enough funding to account for increased rent and housing costs. Residents continue to be priced out of their homes. The current pilot relies on community organizations to identify households. This process helps ensure the most vulnerable residents in our communities are afforded this opportunity. However, some of the most vulnerable people are not connected to any of these organizations, and they should also have the opportunity to apply for the program. One resident took public transportation to City Hall to apply for the pilot program. City staff were unsure of the program and were not able to provide the resident any information regarding the pilot program. A commissioner happened to be at City Hall and witnessed the interaction. The commissioner provided information to the City staff personnel and the resident. Since the Equity Office is involved with the program, City staff told the resident to go to the Equity Office, which is not located at City Hall. Ultimately, the resident was not connected to any of the 10 community organizations. The resident may have been eligible for the program; however, they were not afforded the opportunity to apply or meet with someone from the program.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7 – 1 – 0

For: African American Resource Advisory Commission: Gregory Smith
Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Hanna Huang
Commission for Women: Rebecca Austen
Commission on Aging: Amy Temperley
Early Childhood Council: Raul Alvarez
Hispanic/Latino Quality-of-Life-Resource Advisory Commission: Amanda Afifi
LGBTQ+ Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Charles Curry

Against: None.

Abstain: Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities: Jennifer Powell

Absent: Commission on Immigrant Affairs: Juan Vences-Benitez
Human Rights Commission: Idonna Griffith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza