



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Inclusion Committee

20240327-04: Budget Recommendation Regarding Current Early Childhood Investments

WHEREAS, the Joint Inclusion Committee (“JIC”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council (“Council”) and City Manager on issues pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion to promote close cooperation between Council, City Management, City boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, and individuals, institutions, and agencies to increase and sustain equity, diversity, and inclusion in the city; and

WHEREAS, in the City of Austin, 31% of children under age 6 live in households with low income; and

WHEREAS, 90% of the children in households with low income under age 6 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, 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 federal, state, and local economic recovery funds invested in early childhood systems and programs are expiring in 2024, including essential worker wage stipends for the early childhood workforce; and

WHEREAS, Child Care Scholarship programs through Workforce Solutions Capital Area are at capacity, enrollment is closed, no new funding is available at this time, and as of March 2024, the estimated amount of time a family applying for a scholarship at that time will likely remain on a wait list before they could expect to be outreached for enrollment is 24 months; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin’s recently announced Infrastructure Academy is intended to expand the region’s skilled trade sector and access to child care is an obstacle for the existing workforce, including the skilled trades; and

WHEREAS, the Early Childhood Council has had input from Success By 6, The Children’s Funding Project Workgroup, and GAVA, all calling for significantly increased local government investment in the Childcare sector.

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:

- **APH Staff:** \$171,000 for 2 FTE staff focused on early childhood programs and services
- **Social Service Contracts:** \$13,352,165 to six agencies to provide early childhood services, including early childhood education, infant and early childhood services, and early childhood education quality improvement, for a 12-month term through March 30, 2025, and four 12-month extension options
- **Start-up costs for Pre-K classrooms:** \$128,000 for six classrooms; one-time cost per classroom
- **KinderCare at Bergstrom Tech's Lease:** Annual funding for operating expenses for city funded early childhood facilities
- **Essential infrastructure** such as Family Connects, Maternal and Infant Outreach Program, and WIC programs that specifically serve families with young children from prenatal to age 5
- Allocate full funding for the **Economic Development Grant Program** for Child Care Programs, which has been identified in City Council Resolution No. 20230126-055 as a mechanism to increase access to high-quality, affordable early childhood services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Early Childhood Council recommends that the City of Austin supports further work on the child care component of the Infrastructure Academy and the Success By 6, Children's Funding Project Workgroup, and GAVA recommendations to finalize a Greater Austin area plan by July 1, 2024.**

Date of Approval: March 27, 2024

Record of the vote: 9-0 vote, Commissioners Vargas and Gordon absent (ECC)

Attest: _____



Vice Chair