



RECOMMENDATION

Joint Inclusion Committee

Recommendation Number 20240626-010: Affordable Child Care

WHEREAS, the Joint Inclusion Committee (“Commission”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body that advocates for the close cooperation between the council, City management, City boards, commissions, committees and task forces to increase and sustain equity, diversity and inclusion in the city.

WHEREAS, for decades, families in Austin and Travis County have struggled to find affordable, quality child care and after school and summer programming for children birth to high school graduation (henceforth referred to as “child care”); and

WHEREAS, child care is the highest expense for families after housing in Travis County, and one year of child care costs more than one year of tuition at the University of Texas at Austin; and

WHEREAS, the current waiting list for families with low income who need child care subsidies has more than 4,600 children on it, enrollment is closed, and there is now a 2-year waiting list period; and

WHEREAS, child care costs are out of reach for many families in Austin and Travis County. While families cannot afford the current prices, child care tuition rarely covers the true cost of providing a high-quality program. Costs for quality child care programs (including paying staff a living wage) have increased but families cannot afford to pay more; and

WHEREAS, the child care and out-of-school time workforce, predominantly women of color, earns less than a living wage resulting in high turnover (over 30% annually) and under-staffed programs serving fewer children and cutting hours. Turnover hurts children and creates stress for families; and

WHEREAS, families rely on affordable quality child care to participate in and complete education, training programs, or the workforce; and

WHEREAS, child care and out of school time challenges particularly impact individuals and communities of color that have been historically excluded from economic prosperity:

- 81% of children under age 6 receiving child care subsidies in Travis County are Black, Hispanic, or non-white/multi-racial
- The share of Travis County children under age 6 in working families who have parents working nontraditional hours is 47.1% Black and 42.1% Hispanic

- The child care workforce in Texas is overwhelmingly female and 62% are either Black or Hispanic; and

WHEREAS, a local investment in affordable quality child care and out of school time programs will result in better outcomes for children, greater workforce participation, family economic stability and a stronger economy; and

WHEREAS, quality afterschool and summer programs increase youth's academic skills and skill development for future careers, improve school day attendance, support positive mental and physical health, and support working families by providing a safe environment for youth when school is out; and

WHEREAS, with the high cost of living for families and rapid population growth in Austin and Travis County, increased access to affordable quality child care is imperative to nurture children's development, support working families, and foster community well-being. These programs provide a safe environment for children to learn and play, contributing to improved academic outcomes and reduced crime rates. Moreover, by enabling parents to participate in the workforce, these investments boost productivity and strengthen the local economy. Ultimately, prioritizing these initiatives ensures a brighter, more equitable future for all residents of Austin and Travis County.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Joint Inclusion Committee supports a ballot initiative in Travis County that would generate sustainable funding each year to support quality, affordable child care, including early childhood care and afterschool programming and summer programs. This would add more funding to expand access to quality programs for children and youth, support working families, and help to provide better pay to staff and resources for children and youth in Austin and across Travis County.

Date of Approval: 06/26/2024

Record of the vote:

For: Chair Amanda Afifi, Vice Chair Richard Bondi, Commissioners Sonny Sin, Melissa Ortega, Julie Glasser, Morgan Davis, Jerry Joe Benson, and Jennifer Powell

Against: None

Absent : African American Resource Advisory Commission's Commissioners Serita Fontanesi or Antonio Ross

Off the dais: Early Childhood Council's Leonor Vargas

Attest: 

Joint Inclusion Committee Staff Liaison