



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Human Rights Commission

Recommendation Number (20260323-004): Recommendation on Strengthening and Formalizing Funding, Staffing, Reporting, and Commission Engagement for the City's Anti-Hate Infrastructure During the Upcoming Budget Cycle

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Commission is charged with advising and consulting with the City Council on matters involving discrimination and promoting equal opportunity in the City of Austin;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has previously recognized the need for coordinated local action to respond to hate crimes and hate incidents, through Resolution No. 20101118-059, and most recently through Resolution No. 20250724-122, which directed the City Manager to establish a comprehensive plan outlining programs and resources to respond to hate crimes and to expand the We All Belong initiative into a more formal city-led structure;

WHEREAS, the July 24, 2025 resolution called for, among other things, establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee on Hate Crimes, quarterly meetings, a multilingual and accessible hate crimes web portal, a community notification and engagement program, stronger transparency and accuracy in hate-crime reporting data, and an annual hate crimes report;

WHEREAS, the City's October 8, 2025 staff response confirmed that oversight of the We All Belong initiative shifted to the Human Rights Division of Austin Equity and Inclusion effective October 1, 2025, and that implementation would require significant cross-department coordination among Austin Equity and Inclusion, the Austin Police Department, Austin Police Oversight, Austin Public Health, and other City partners;

WHEREAS, the same staff response further acknowledged that the City intended to recruit only a part-time employee to lead stakeholder engagement and data analysis, while staff recommended establishing a full-time position to sustain and expand the work, indicating that the current staffing and administrative structure may not yet match the expanded mandate established by Council;

WHEREAS, the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 adopted City budget includes \$150,000 for the We All Belong anti-hate campaign and reflects a broader Human Rights Division budget of \$1,435,358, but that division is also responsible for numerous other issue areas, including immigrant affairs, ADA compliance and accessibility, LGBTQ+ advocacy, anti-human trafficking, veterans' affairs, and related human-rights functions;

WHEREAS, Austin's population is estimated at 993,588 as of July 1, 2024, meaning the City's identified dedicated anti-hate allocation of \$150,000 represents approximately \$0.15 per resident;

WHEREAS, New York City operates a formal Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes with a citywide interagency structure and a documented \$3 million baseline enhancement, and with a

population of approximately 8.478 million residents as of July 2024, that investment amounts to approximately \$0.35 per resident, more than double Austin's dedicated anti-hate investment on a per-capita basis;

WHEREAS, Chicago operates a broader civil-rights model through its Commission on Human Relations, which has a Fiscal Year 2026 budget of approximately \$2.765 million, explicitly provides support to victims of hate crimes and hate incidents, and includes at least two hate-crime victim advocate positions, and with a population of approximately 2.721 million residents, the Commission's budget reflects roughly \$1.02 per resident in agency infrastructure;

WHEREAS, these comparison cities are not identical to Austin and their budget structures are not perfectly analogous; however, they demonstrate that cities with more mature anti-hate systems tend to provide clearer staffing, more formal interagency structure, more stable reporting obligations, and substantially greater operational support than Austin currently provides through its standalone anti-hate allocation;

WHEREAS, Austin's current public-facing reporting system routes hate crime reports through APD channels including 911, 311, APD's online iReport, and APDHateCrimes@austintexas.gov, with review by APD's Hate Crimes Review Committee, while City Council has also directed the City to improve transparency, accessibility, multilingual reporting, and annual publication of hate-crime information;

WHEREAS, Austin's own anti-hate materials have stated that hate crimes and hate incidents are underreported, and prior City materials noted that in 2022 most reported hate crimes in Austin targeted gender identity and/or sexual orientation, underscoring the need for reliable reporting mechanisms, victim support, and sustained community trust;

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Commission finds that Austin has made anti-hate work a recognized policy commitment, but that current dedicated funding, staffing clarity, and implementation capacity do not yet reflect the scale of the commitments;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that the Austin City Council, during the upcoming budget cycle, ask the City Manager to evaluate and bring forward options to strengthen and formalize the City's anti-hate infrastructure, including but not limited to the We All Belong initiative, the Human Rights Division's anti-hate functions, and associated interdepartmental reporting and response systems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that City Council consider increasing recurring funding above the current \$150,000 dedicated anti-hate allocation in order to better align resources with the expanded duties established by Resolution No. 20250724-122, including multilingual access, quarterly intergovernmental coordination, community engagement, data analysis, public reporting, and victim-centered prevention and response capacity;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that City Council consider funding at least one dedicated full-time equivalent position to support implementation, stakeholder engagement, data integrity, interdepartmental coordination, and public accountability for the City's anti-hate work, consistent with the City staff recommendation that a full-time position is needed to sustain and expand the effort;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that City Council direct staff to evaluate peer-city models, including but not limited to the New York City Office for

the Prevention of Hate Crimes and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, to identify best practices related to:

1. dedicated staffing and operational ownership;
2. interagency governance structure;
3. victim support and referral services;
4. multilingual and accessible public reporting pathways;
5. dashboard transparency and annual reporting; and
6. sustained community participation and trust-building;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that any strengthened anti-hate model in Austin preserve meaningful public participation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that the City provide biannual briefings to the Human Rights Commission, to the extent practical and lawful, regarding implementation of the anti-hate framework, including funding, staffing, reporting practices, identified service gaps, and opportunities for commission input; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends that the City formally involve the Human Rights Commission, where practical and possible, in reviewing implementation progress, identifying barriers to access, elevating community concerns, and advising on how Austin’s anti-hate model can remain both effective and community-centered; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission encourages the City Council to treat anti-hate response as not only a communications campaign, but as an ongoing human-rights, public-safety, and public-trust function requiring durable funding, defined accountability, and a model scaled to Austin’s actual needs.

Date of Approval: March 23, 2026

Motioned By: Commissioner Krueger

Seconded By: Commissioner Kirsh Pozen

Vote: 8-0

For: Chair Duhon, Vice Chair Zeidan, Commissioners Aslam, Davis, Kirsh Pozen, Krueger, Morgan Avitia, Oliva-Martínez

Against: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Off the dais: None

Absent: Commissioners Igram, Khawar

Attest: Ryan Sperling

(Ryan Sperling, Staff Liaison)