



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Joint Inclusion Committee

Recommendation 20260325-028: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Recommendations for Current Early Childhood Investments

WHEREAS, in the City of Austin, 30% of children under age 6 live in households with low income; and

WHEREAS, 94% of the children in households with low income under age 6 are children of color; and

WHEREAS, decades of research proves 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 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 City's Quality of Life Study for Austin's Families with Young Children, which found that 78% of caregivers surveyed experienced some difficulty paying for child care in the last 12 months; the GenATX initiative from the Office of the Mayor; the recently launched Infrastructure Academy; Raising Travis County, the voter-approved fund to increase access to early care and education and to afterschool programming; and the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Strategic Plan, a data-driven community strategic plan designed to build more efficient and coordinated systems for quality childcare and childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, these existing commitments rely on sustained partnerships through social service agreements with Austin area providers, experts, and educators who provide preventative support, foster joint partnerships to enhance coordination, improve wraparound support, save public dollars and interventions over the long term, and increase access to funding and resources that may not be available to individuals; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin issued budget cuts of 10% across-the-board to social service agreements for FY 2026; and there is another \$16.8 million in projected cuts to social service programs in FY 2027; additionally, federal, state, and local economic recovery funds invested in early childhood programs have concluded; and

WHEREAS, there are over 6,500 children on the Child Care Scholarship Waitlist administered through Workforce Solutions Capital Area; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Committee recommends that the City of Austin maintain all current investments, contracts, and maintenance agreements in early childhood programs and infrastructure, including but not limited to:

- Maintain funding for contracts related to services for families and children within Austin Public Health and Austin Economic Development, as detailed below. These contracted services provide targeted, proven preventive measures for families with young children, reducing the need for more costly interventions later. *(List #1-10)*
- Maintain funding for public service child care service contracts funded through Federal HUD-CDBG funds that support parenting teens and Early Head Start *(List #11-12)*
- Maintain funding for current city programs related to childcare and children’s services, which have a proven track record of strengthening child care programs and providing preventative supports for families with young children. *(List #13-16)*
- Maintain the APH and AED staffing budget for critical staff who oversee childhood programs and services
- If the City Manager creates a comprehensive rubric tool to assess future funding for the City’s existing social service contracts, the rubric should consider the following:
 - Child care, early childhood development, and early intervention supports.
 - Conduct regular community engagement and public feedback sessions with social service providers, child care providers, social service program participants, and community stakeholders to understand and identify community priorities and develop the comprehensive rubric and social service contract restructuring plan to maximize service impact.

Maintain Funding Levels for the Following:

Contracts related to service for Families and Children through Austin Public Health (APH)

1. Any Baby Can
2. Todos Juntos
3. VinCare Services of Austin
4. Austin Child Guidance Center
5. Local Area School Districts
- 6.

Contracts Related to Service for Families and Children through Austin Economic Development (AED)

7. Workforce Solutions Capital Area Workforce Board

8. KinderCare
9. RISE Child Development Center
10. Mainspring Schools
11. Ginsberg Kershner & Associates

Public Service Childcare Services Contracts with Federal HUD-CDBG Funds through APH

12. Child Inc.
13. Austin Independent School District

Current City Programs Related to Child Care and Children's Services

14. Year two implementation comprehensive support network and resource hub for home-based childcare providers
15. High-quality child care fee waivers
16. Maternal Infant Outreach Program
17. Family Connects

Date of Approval: March 25, 2026

Motioned By: Commissioner Laake-Stanfield

Seconded By: Commissioner Parsons

Vote: 9-0

For: Vice Chair Bondi, Commissioners Alvizo, Benson, Castaneda, Chang, Laake-Stanfield, Kanawati, Oliva-Martínez, Parsons, Thakkar

Against: None

Abstain: Commissioner Alvizo

Recuse: None

Off the dais: None

Absent: Chair Afifi, Commissioners Bullard, McNary, Melendez

Attest: *Ryan Sperling*

(Ryan Sperling, Staff Liaison)