



**EMMA S. BARRIENTOS MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER
ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION 20260325-3**

Date: March 25, 2026

Subject: FY2027 Budget Recommendation – Funding for Academia Cuauhtli

Motioned By: Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz

Seconded By: Board Member Quintana

Recommendation

The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Advisory Board (MACC) recommends the City Council direct the City Manager to take the following actions and to allocate funds for the following item for FY 2027.

1. Support funding for Academia Cuauhtli’s FY27 operating expenses in the amount of \$130,000.
2. Add one full-time Program Director position.

Rationale:

Academia Cuauhtli:

Academia Cuauhtli is a bilingual cultural revitalization program for third to fifth grade students attending AISD schools. Its mission is to honor cultural heritage, foster social justice, and reclaim collective identities in pursuit of educational freedom. For the past 10 years they have focused on establishing various partnerships and initiatives within the community with key focuses on students, teachers, parents, and community members. The bilingual cultural revitalization Saturday Academy offers ethnic studies and Danza Mexica instruction to AISD third- to fifth graders at no cost, including breakfast and transportation. The parent support program engages families during the Saturday Academy, providing community resources tailored to their needs. The Summer program consist of a culturally sustaining STEAM program for third to fifth grade AISD students to learn coding and Danza Mexica in both Spanish and English. The teacher’s professional development opportunities prepare and mentor teachers through support networks, professional development workshops and conferences.

The MACC Advisory Board supports the ongoing funding request of Academia Cuauhtli in the amount of \$130,000 and the addition of one full time Program Director position to support the academic and cultural growth, sense of identity, and belonging of indigenous, Hispanic, Spanish-speaking youth in Austin.

Vote: Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz motioned to add Academia Cuahtli's \$130,000 request to the 2027 budget recommendation. Board Member Quintana seconded on a 7-1 vote. Board Members Duarte and Sanchez absent.

For: Chair Angelica Navarro, Vice Chair Lillian "Lily" Zamarripa-Saenz, Board Member Hilario "Larry" Amaro, Board Member John Estrada, Board Member Cynthia "Cy" Herrera, Board Member Lynda Quintana, Board Member Raul "Roy" Reyna

Against: Board Member Noemi Castro

Abstain:

Absent: Board Member Alexander "Al" Duarte, Board Member Selma Sanchez

Attest:



Michelle Rojas, Staff Liaison

TO: Mayor and Austin City Council

FROM: Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board

DATE: March 31, 2026

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Academia Cuauhtli Partnership Programming

Dear Mayor and Members of the Austin City Council,

On behalf of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC) Advisory Board, we write to express our strong support for continued and expanded investment in the partnership between the ESB-MACC and Academia Cuauhtli.

As outlined in the attached proposal, Academia Cuauhtli provides culturally rooted, community-based education that centers Indigenous knowledge, Mexican American history, and youth leadership development. The program has demonstrated meaningful impact for participating students and families by fostering cultural identity, academic engagement, and intergenerational connection.

We want to be clear that, as outlined in our primary budget recommendation letter, the Board's highest priorities remain:

1. Approval of the FY2027 staff-recommended operating budget
2. Funding of critical value-engineered Phase 2 capital items
3. Funding of essential staffing positions (FTEs) required to operate the expanded facility

At the same time, we strongly encourage Council to support this partnership programming as an important complementary investment in community impact.

The ESB-MACC is not only a facility—it is a living cultural space. Partnerships like Academia Cuauhtli ensure that the center fulfills its mission by activating the space with programming that is deeply aligned with community values and history. This program represents a model for culturally responsive education and community engagement that is uniquely suited to the ESB-MACC.

An allocation of \$130,000 would provide critical support to sustain and grow this work, ensuring that youth and families—particularly those from historically underserved communities—continue

to have access to programming that affirms identity, builds leadership, and strengthens cultural continuity.

Supporting Academia Cuauhtli also reflects the City's broader commitments to equity, education, and cultural preservation. It is an investment not only in programming, but in people, heritage, and the long-term vitality of Austin's communities.

The Advisory Board respectfully urges the Austin City Council to support this request, as resources allow, while prioritizing the critical operational, capital, and staffing needs outlined in our primary letter.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Austin's cultural and community infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board