



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Commission on Immigrant Affairs

Recommendation Number: 20260504-005 Support of Academia Cuauhtli Programming and Expansion

WHEREAS, since its founding in 2013, Academia Cuauhtli (founded by Nuestro Grupo, a community-based volunteer organization) was established at the ESB-MACC as a free Saturday culture and language revitalization academy for elementary school children and their parents, with a curriculum focused on Indigeneity, social justice, Tejano history, traditional arts, and *danza Mexica* and since July 2014, Academia Cuauhtli has served as an official educational enterprise partnered with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Culture Center (ESB-MACC);

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli, administered through a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Austin, Austin Independent School District (AISD), and Nuestro Grupo embraces and fulfills the Commission on Immigrant Affairs mission of collaborative engagement by advocating for educational equity and well-being for immigrant, first-generation, and low socioeconomic background AISD students in collaboration with the University of Texas at Austin;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission expressed as “to honor our communities' cultural heritage, foster social justice, and reclaim our collective identities in pursuit of educational freedom” by serving as a means for the comprehensive advancement of the students and their parents—via its strong partnership with students’ parents—by providing a supportive and uplifting learning environment, as well as for providing for the social, and economic needs, including the extensive COVID-related assistance extended to its participant Latino families during the pandemic in Austin, Texas;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauthli fulfills its mission by enrolling from 2014-2023 over 800 AISD emergent bilingual students, trained over 250 Indigenous/Latinx public school teachers, hosted over 25 professional development workshops, initiated Cuauhtli’s Grow Your Own bilingual leadership development program for AISD teachers of color, and successfully implemented a research-university-community partnership between AISD, UT Austin’s College of Education Department of Educational Leadership and Policy faculty and graduate student researchers, the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (LLILAS), the UT History Department, and the Austin community (see research publication link: <https://acemiacuauhtli.com/publications/>);

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission in collaboration with the City of Austin when former Mayor Adler and the 2022 City of Austin Council Members granted Academia

Cuauhtli a dedicated, full-time employee to manage all educational programming with funding running through the Austin Parks and Recreation Department at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, together with generous support to fund Academia Cuauhtli throughout 2022-23;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission by responding to the social and economic needs of parents and secured over \$70,000 in direct financial support for them through the COVID-19 crisis when many parents suffered unemployment, illness, and a lack of digital equity;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli with its own limited financial resources, nevertheless fulfilled its mission by garnering financial assistance from the Mexican Consulate so as to provide direct support to students and parents lacking both remote learning access and computer skills for their children attending online classes in AISD schools during the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission through an annually generated culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum (18 curricular units aligned to TEK requirements created to date that further satisfy state mandates) for the AISD Spanish-speaking community, including but not limited to Tejano history, migration, environmental studies, and Indigeneity;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission through Aztech Kidz Code (AKC) Summer School, which is a project-based, culturally sustaining Indigenous STEM program for second-through eighth-grade students attending AISD where students learn coding, video game design, digital monetization, app development, Artificial Intelligence, and Danza Mexica in Spanish, English, and Nahuatl, including this summer of 2023 (made possible by the above-mentioned City of Austin grant), we have hired staff, purchased 50 computers, and enrolled over 190 students;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission through teacher preparation and mentorship by creating teacher support networks, hosting professional teacher development workshops and conferences, and a diverse array of teachers and educators throughout Austin, nationally and internationally, including via la Colaborativa Cuauhtli that sends teachers to Mexico annually (e.g., [Expanding the Horizons of Bilingual Elementary Education: La Colaborativa Cuauhtli](#))—collectively promise to raise the visibility of the Commission of Immigrant Affairs’ leadership role in education, Indigeneity, STEM, and the arts;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli fulfills its mission through its parental education and involvement initiatives to ensure an integrated education program beneficial to the entire Latino/Black/Indigenous community (see video “[Academia Cuauhtli: Un proyecto de revitalización de la lengua y la cultura](#)”);

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli seeks to further deepen and expand its curriculum by expanding Academia Cuauhtli’s researched based curriculum to the City of Austin’s recreation

centers in neighborhoods where immigrant, spanish-speaking youth are conceprated allowing us to expand our services; and,

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli has, since 2013, intentionally sought and provided operating funds through direct cost contributions by AISD and UT, two of its primary partners, and including community donation drives, all of which amounted to at least \$50,000 yearly, and another \$140,0000 in documented, in-kind professional volunteer hours annually; given the expanded numbers of students and families now served with a more holistic approach, plus the additional summer programs through Aztech Kidz Code Summer;

WHEREAS, Academia Cuauhtli teachers and volunteers have won the following local, state, and national level community awards: 1) 2022 Maestra Luz Alvarez-Sims won the Humanities Texas Linden Heck Howell Outstanding Teaching of Texas History Award <https://www.humanitiestexas.org/education/teacher-awards>; 2) July 29, 2022 Martha Cotera received the Torunga Award from Mujeres Activistas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) at the annual conference and institute in Ft. Collins Colorado. The award is granted to a scholar for her commitment to interdisciplinary Chicana, Latina, Afro-Latina, Native American and Indigenous feminist scholarship, cultural productions, and activism (belief in the scholar-activist model); 3) March 2, 2023 Azteca Sirias nominated for the Young Leader of the Year award by Div Inc <https://www.divinc.org/blog/meet-the-2023-champions-of-change-award-nominees>; 4) March 2, 2023 Dr. Angela Valenzuela nominated for the Champion of year award by Div Inc <https://www.divinc.org/blog/meet-the-2023-champions-of-change-award-nominees>; 5) April 17, 2023 Dr. Emilio Zamora won the University of Texas at Austin's Tower Awards 2023 as the William C. Powers Jr. Lifetime Service Award. <https://diversity.utexas.edu/tower-award-2023/>; 6) April 21, 2023 Katya Guzman, AKC Coding & Danza Mexia teacher nominated for the Latino community service award by Austin ISD <https://www.austinisd.org/laaa>; 7) 2023 Grace Hopkins, Bilingual Teacher at Perez Elementary was recognized as teacher of the year from the in Area Association for Bilingual Education and candidate for teacher of the year through Texas Association for Bilingual Education; 8) September 2022 Maria Del Carmen Unda nominated for the Habla Con Orgullo Latina Community Leader finalist; 9) April 2020 Angela Valenzuela received top award from the American Educational Research Association, AERA Division G's Henry T. Trueba Award for Research Leading to the Transformation of the Social Contexts of Education, citing the work of Nuestro Grupo/Academia Cuauhtli; 10) May 2020 Academia Cuauhtli nominated for Examples of *Excelencia* in Education by Excelencia, Washington; 11) March 31, 2016 Annual Cesar E. Chávez annual *Sí se Puede* community award, accorded separately to Drs. Emilio Zamora and Angela Valenzuela for their work with Nuestro Grupo and Academia Cuauhtli; 12) May 19, 2018 Awards of Excellence at the ESB-MACC, accorded to Dr. Emilio Zamora for Service and Martha P. Cotera for Lifetime Achievement; 13) 2017 Dr. Angela Valenzuela received *Habla Con Orgullo* Latina Legend Award;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs is entrusted with protecting the best interest of the citizens, with a particular interest in Austin's (and surrounding area) immigrant community as it concerns the areas of education and human services;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COMMISSION ON IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS supports and approves the Hispanic Quality of Life Resources Advisory Commissions FY 2026-2027 Budget Recommendation (XYZ) for supporting largely immigrant, Spanish-speaking children and youth in Austin by increasing funding for culturally and linguistically diverse programs through an allocation of \$130,000.00 for Academia Cuauhtli.

Date of Approval: May 4, 2026

Motioned by: Vice Chair Johnson

Seconded by: Chair Dorantes

Vote: 9-0

For : Chair Dorantes, Vice-Chair Johnson, Commissioners De La Rosa, Edwin, Joshi, Kaba, Kanawati, Solis, Saucedo

Against : None

Absent : Commissioners Ortega and Roy

Attest : *Nekaybaw Watson*, Staff Liaison