BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Early Childhood Council

Recommendation Number: 20200108-6ci-
Recommendation for additional early childhood staff person in FY21 budget

WHEREAS, 34,000 children under age 6 in Austin/Travis County live in households with low income and 90% of these 34,000 children are children of color;

WHEREAS, Only 34% of children under age 4 from families with low income are receiving any early learning services;

WHEREAS, Only 39% of children from households with low-income and only 36% of Black children begin Kindergarten ready to learn and succeed in school;

WHEREAS, Austin/Travis County has a robust, data-driven community strategic plan designed to coordinate efforts, improve child and family outcomes as well, and build more efficient and coordinated systems for equitable access and impact (the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Strategic Plan) which demonstrates that children born into households with low income in Austin often lack access to the same quantity or quality of resources as their higher-income neighbors;

WHEREAS, decades of research prove that the disadvantages begin the moment children come into the world because children born into poverty and children of color are disproportionately born early, at low-birth-weight, or with chronic illnesses, and are less likely than their peers to be ready for, or successful at, school;

WHEREAS, a child who begins Kindergarten ready to succeed is set on a path that predicts their third-grade reading level, high-school graduation, justice system involvement, college perseverance, and adult earning potential;

WHEREAS, community investment in early childhood programs results in not only more successful individual citizens, but also significant economic benefits for the community as a whole;

WHEREAS, Austin Public Health (APH) plays a central role in the development, implementation, and monitoring of this community plan and the many programs and services integral to the effort; and the City's focus on early childhood, involvement in early childhood

community planning and coordination, and investment in early childhood programs and services have grown in the last two years;

WHEREAS, APH currently has only one full-time, regular staff person and one temporary staff person whose term is set to end August 28, 2020, who are fully dedicated to working on early childhood issues; and the current staff are stretched and do not have the capacity to efficiently and effectively complete all current projects and work, and act upon all the opportunities that have arisen for the City to contribute to the Community's strategic plan to ensure that all children birth to age 5 in Austin/Travis County are happy, healthy and ready for school success;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin budget currently funds only 1 full-time employee (FTE) (at APH) dedicated to early childhood programs and services, and by comparison, the city of Chattanooga, TN (which is a peer-city in the Pritzker Foundation National League of Cities early childhood cohort) funds an Office of Early Childhood Education with a Director and two additional FTEs;

WHEREAS, calculations show that Austin City & Travis County invested $220 in early childhood last year per child under age 6 from low-income households, and by comparison other city investments per child are more than double this: San Antonio, TX - $419, Denver, CO - $935, Portland, OR - $965, Philadelphia, PA - $1141;

WHEREAS, an additional FTE at APH would improve efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of city investments and community efforts by increasing staff capacity to:

- Build equitable access to resources and opportunities and improve school readiness and related outcomes for children of color and children from families with low income by increasing the availability, efficiency, and effectiveness of early childhood programs and services
- Elevate community engagement and family voice in early childhood programs and services
- Contribute more deeply to planning and coordination with community partners on the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 and 2-gen strategic plans
- Expand and deepen collaborations with other city departments to improve policies, resources, and services related to early childhood
- Maintain and update data on the availability of high quality, affordable child care in Austin
- Respond to Council directives and take advantage of new opportunities to improve early childhood outcomes in Austin/Travis County as they arise

WHEREAS, this request aligns with the City of Austin Strategic Direction 2023 within the Government that Works for All outcome under the indicator of "Equity of City programs and resource allocation" and with the Economic Opportunity and Affordability outcome under the indicator of "cost of living compared to income;"

WHEREAS, the City investment in this position would help our community leverage up to $450,000 in early childhood capacity-building funding from the Pritzker Children's Learning

Initiative to improve outcomes for more than 17,000 infants and toddlers from low-income households;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council recommends that the City of Austin fund add one additional full-time employee for Austin Public Health in the 2021 budget dedicated to supporting equitable access to high-quality early childhood programs and services for families with children prenatal to age 5 from households with low-income.

Date of Approval: January 8, 2020

Record of the vote: 6-0 vote with 1 abstaining (Cathy McHorse)

Attest: Rachel Farley