

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is a part of Welcoming America's "Welcoming Cities and Counties" Initiative, and formally proclaimed itself a Welcoming City on September 19, 2013, with the goal of creating a welcoming atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs passed a resolution, subsequently adopted by the City Council on March 20, 2014, directing that the City of Austin take steps to become a "Welcoming Community" by engaging community stakeholders, such as government, educational institutions and non-profits, and to work together to define a vision for Austin as a Welcoming City, including "troubleshooting current and future issues that will affect Austin's immigrant population"; and

WHEREAS, for years, children and minors from Central American nations have sought refuge in the United States, but according to U.S. Department of Homeland Security documents, the recent dramatic increase in children travelling to the U.S. without their parents from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala is largely a result of high rates of poverty and violence in their home countries; and

WHEREAS, gang and drug trafficking violence has driven Honduras's murder rate to the highest in the world and El Salvador's murder rate to fourth highest; and

WHEREAS, from October 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, more than 57,000 unaccompanied migrant children, those travelling without a parent or a guardian, have been apprehended at the southwestern U.S. border, which is a 106% increase from the prior year, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and

WHEREAS, the number of unaccompanied children ages 12 and younger apprehended at the border has increased 117% this fiscal year compared with last fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, there are tens of thousands of unaccompanied children in the custody of federal government agencies in Texas, Arizona, California and Oklahoma, with the largest numbers of children crossing through the Rio Grande Valley in Texas; and

WHEREAS, projections state that the number of children arriving in the U.S. without parents or guardians could increase to over 90,000 by the end of 2014; and

WHEREAS, children are always among the most vulnerable in any emergency; and

WHEREAS, many of the unaccompanied children arriving at the border are suffering from physical illnesses, diarrhea, dehydration, exhaustion, hunger, emotional trauma and some have been victimized during their long and difficult journey and are in urgent need of protective adult care, medical care, supportive supervision, nutritious food and safe housing; and

WHEREAS, the processing, housing and caring for these unaccompanied children presents extraordinary operational challenges for federal and state officials, to include struggling to meet the basic needs of such a large number of children; and

WHEREAS, President Obama has called the flood of unaccompanied migrant children seeking refuge from violence and poverty in Central America a "humanitarian crisis"; and

WHEREAS, senior officials from the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and White House Domestic Policy Council recently hosted a conference call to update local officials across the country on the situation with the unaccompanied minors along the US/Mexico Border, and advised that local communities could help by providing social services, shelter and legal support for the children; and

WHEREAS, addressing a complex humanitarian crisis of this magnitude, involving tens of thousands of vulnerable children separated from their families, will require the help of many partners at all levels of the government and the community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is a welcoming, compassionate and caring community as has been demonstrated many times throughout history, to include our assistance for the Katrina refugees; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council expresses its support for efforts to provide services to unaccompanied minor refugees from Central America.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT

The City Council directs the City Manager to collaborate with other governmental entities and community partners to identify available resources to support these efforts, to pursue potential funding sources, and to report to City Council with a status of efforts by September 30, 2014.

ADOPTED: _____, 2014

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk