

## DRAFT RECOMMENDATION: 20171009

### *To the Austin/Travis Food Policy Board*

#### Support for City of Austin Earned Sick Days Policy

WHEREAS, the City of Austin recognizes the significant financial benefits that the food sector contributes to our regional economy, along with the challenges low- and mid-income workers (including food sector workers) face in meeting current costs to live and work in Austin; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has prioritized affordability and recognized food access and food insecurity as pressing public health and equity issues, thereby investing resources in efforts to address the complex intersections that create these problems (e.g., wages, housing, displacement, transportation, health care, institutional racism); and

WHEREAS, on September 28, 2017 the Austin City Council passed a resolution directing the City Manager to provide staff support for a stakeholder process to gain feedback on a paid sick days policy for private employers and to provide a summary of responses by December 5, 2017; and

WHEREAS, the same resolution [20170928-055](#) specifies inviting representatives from the business community (with special attention paid to small businesses), as well as community and health organizations with missions related to the topic of paid sick days; and

WHEREAS, the resolution highlights research done by Work Strong Austin, a coalition of community organizations and businesses that has been meeting since 2015 and whose [fact sheet](#) emphasizes the 223,000 workers in Austin who are currently at risk of losing wages or their jobs, thereby jeopardizing their health and financial stability, if they do not go to work when they are sick; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), an established non-partisan think tank, reported in June, 2017 that for a typical low-wage worker, even a half-day of missed income due to unpaid sick leave equates to their entire monthly budget for fruits and vegetables and that three unpaid missed sick days equals an entire month's groceries; and

WHEREAS, the same report shows that seven states, the District of Columbia, and 31 municipalities have passed paid sick days laws in recent years with significant increases in the percentage of low-wage workers earning paid sick leave throughout much of the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) points to a 2013 Journal of Food Protection paper, which cites food handling as a contributing factor in up to 2/3 of restaurant-related foodborne outbreaks, and finds that of the almost 60% of food workers that reported working while ill, lack of paid sick leave was the most prevalent reason they gave; and

WHEREAS, in September 2010 the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United released a comprehensive analysis of the restaurant industry that includes an extensive survey of restaurant workers and found

that almost 90% did not report access to paid sick days and more than 63% self-reported cooking and serving food while sick; and

WHEREAS, a [December 2015 report](#) co-authored by UC Berkeley's Food Labor Research Center laments the inadequate minimum wages for tipped restaurant workers including the \$2.13 federal subminimum still paid in Texas and the high percentage of restaurant workers who live in poverty - 25.3% in Texas, 1.8 times the 13.8% poverty rate for overall employed Texans; and

WHEREAS, an earned sick days ordinance could benefit Austin's economy and lead to significant improvements in public health and income stability, thereby improving food security and food access as well as resilience in our regional food sector;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Austin Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFPB) supports the City of Austin's creation of a working group to explore a citywide ordinance that would guarantee earned paid sick leave for workers, and would be created with the input of local experts on economic and health equity, as well as workers and business owners representing the diverse segments of our regional food system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Members of the ATCFPB will make available to the Austin City Council suggested potential participants in the stakeholder group described in the September 28, 2017 resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The ATCFPB would like to review the stakeholder group's summary findings, prior to endorsing final recommendations for a citywide sick leave ordinance.