



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Immigrant Affairs

Recommendation Number: 20200504-2c: Quality of Life Study of Immigrant Communities

WHEREAS, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs passed a recommendation, subsequently adopted by City Council on March 20, 2014, declaring Austin a Welcoming City,

WHEREAS, in 2018, Council directed the City Manager to “make a recommendation to City Council to determine how the City can most effectively coordinate and support policy and efforts related to the immigrant community,”

WHEREAS, in August 2019, the City Manager published “Serving Austin’s Immigrant Community Report,” which included among its recommendations that the city “develop a strategy for providing services to immigrant communities,”

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has highlighted existing disparities that negatively impact the immigrant communities in Austin. Immigrants, documented and undocumented, are facing difficulties in accessing resources and information, particularly during this time of heightened fear and uncertainty. The needs of the immigrant communities vary, in part, according to the way they arrived to the U.S. For example, while some qualify for support through the Office of Refugee Resettlement, including financial assistance and English language classes, others do not. Their needs also vary based on their levels of literacy and existing English language proficiency, all of which affect their ability to navigate systems and advocate for themselves. At this time, we have incomplete information about our immigrant communities, which affects our ability to support and serve them,

WHEREAS, Austin/Travis County needs up-to-date and accurate information about our immigrant communities, with data collection methods and analysis that are anti-racist and equity based, will not put this community at risk for deportation, detention, harassment, or abuse, ensuring that our outreach and engagement efforts are culturally relevant and tailored to our various immigrant communities in order to provide resources and information that resonate and are effective.

WHEREAS, difficulties that our immigrant communities face in accessing resources because we lack the relationships and adequate channels of communication to reach them can result in an inability to provide them with the resources they need, and inefficiencies in our service provision

WHEREAS, the results of a Quality of Life study answer questions about the immigrant communities and will subsequently influence our policy recommendations to Austin City Council as well as our current outreach and engagement efforts. This research will guide our initiatives and bring our immigrant communities into the planning and implementation of future initiative,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Immigrant Affairs recommends Austin fund a Quality of Life Study of the immigrant and refugee community in Austin. Our understanding is that such studies cost \$200,000.

Date of Approval: May 4, 2020

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 8-0 vote, with commissioners Nicole Merritt, Rennison Lalgee, Juan Vences-Benitez, and Banafsheh Madaninejad not present

Attest: Connie H. Gonzales