



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Early Childhood Council

20220112-3ai: Recommendation to acknowledge child care workers as essential workers and express gratitude for their service to the Austin community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

WHEREAS, Austin's housing and property values have increased dramatically in recent years; and

WHEREAS, essential workers in the childcare industry are finding it nearly impossible to live in Austin with the rapidly increasing cost of living, especially in the housing market; and

WHEREAS, the displacement of these essential workers to suburban and exurban communities will have long-term, harmful impacts on childcare options in Austin; and

WHEREAS, Austin has long suffered from a severe shortage of affordable, quality childcare options; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Austin's child care industry, leading to the permanent closure of untold numbers of childcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2021 NAECY survey, in Texas, 86% of child care centers are experiencing a staffing shortage. Further, 53% of programs impacted by staffing shortages are serving fewer children; 33% have a longer waitlist; 35% are unable to open classrooms; and 20% have reduced their operating hours (https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-74/naeyc_survey_statedatawithquotes_sep2021.pdf); and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Study of Child Care Employment, The poverty rate for early educators working in the childcare industry in Texas is 18.6%, nearly twice as high as for Texas workers in general (9.7%) with a median wage of \$10.15 (<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/texas/>); and

WHEREAS, a shortage of childcare options has a severe and detrimental effect on the Austin economy, with lack of access to childcare being one of the primary reasons why people delay or avoid seeking employment; and

WHEREAS, a recent report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the Texas Chamber of Business and Industry, and Early Matters indicates that poor options for childcare in the State of Texas

costs our state economy an estimated \$9.39 billion annually
(<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/article/building-strong-foundations-future>).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council requests that the Austin City Council pass a resolution acknowledging that workers in the childcare field in Austin are essential workers who have experienced serious burdens and stress over the past few years, and are deserving of admiration and gratitude for their service to our community; and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council encourages the Austin City Council to identify ways to alleviate the financial burden that is leading to the increasing displacement of these essential workers out of Austin, such as property-tax relief, assistance for child care and work-related expenses, transportation subsidies, housing subsidies, etc.; and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the Early Childhood Council encourages the Austin City Council to establish a task force to address workforce issues in the child care sector.

Date of Approval: January 12, 2022

Record of the vote: 9 – 0

Attest:


