



## **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**Recommendation Number: 20141027-5a:** In Support of Expanded Housing Options

**WHEREAS**, “Stable housing is the foundation upon which people build their lives – absent a safe, decent and affordable place to live, it is next to impossible to achieve good health, positive educational outcomes, or reach one’s economic potential.” (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, 2010); and

**WHEREAS**, there are nearly 85,000 extremely low income and very low income households in the City of Austin; and

**WHEREAS**, there are 716,367 extremely low income renter households in Texas whose income is \$18,422 or less for a family of four; and

**WHEREAS**, 78 percent of extremely low income renter households in Texas pay more than half of their incomes for rent; and

**WHEREAS** nearly 39 percent of Austin households are considered cost-burdened because they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a shortage of homes that are affordable and available for extremely low income renter households in Texas and in the City of Austin; and

**WHEREAS**, this shortage of homes that are affordable and available for extremely low income renter households is a cause of homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, thousands of Austin families are waiting up to 5 years for a chance to participate in the City of Austin's affordable housing voucher program; and

**WHEREAS**, fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Travis County is \$1,074 per month, while extremely low income renter households can only afford \$566 per month; and

**WHEREAS**, a worker earning minimum wage in Travis County would have to work 112 hours per week in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment; and

**WHEREAS**, Congress established the National Housing Trust Fund in 2008 as a dedicated source of funding for the production, preservation, rehabilitation, and operation of housing for people with the lowest incomes, including people who are homeless; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Housing Trust Fund has not received any dollars since it was created, despite the growing need for rental housing that extremely low income households can afford; and

**WHEREAS**, investing in the National Housing Trust Fund will create jobs in the construction trades and in property management; and

**WHEREAS**, for every \$5 billion appropriated to the National Housing Trust Fund, approximately \$289 million would be allocated to Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, the mortgage interest deduction is under consideration for change by the U.S. Congress; and

**WHEREAS**, over three-quarters of the benefit for the mortgage interest deduction goes to households with income in the top fifth of all taxpayers; and

**WHEREAS**, only slightly more than half of homeowners who pay interest on their mortgages benefit from the mortgage interest deduction; and

**WHEREAS**, by converting the mortgage interest tax deduction to a 15% non-refundable credit and lowering the cap of eligible mortgage value from \$1 million to \$500,000, the number of taxpayers with mortgages who get a tax break would increase by 16 million, 99% of whom have incomes under \$100,000 a year; and

**WHEREAS**, these modest modifications would not only provide mortgage interest tax benefits to more middle class and lower income homeowners, but also would reduce the cost of the mortgage interest tax expenditure, thereby freeing up an estimated \$197 billion in federal resources over 10 years for housing assistance to low income households.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Austin Human Rights Commission recommends that the Austin City Council endorse the United for Homes Campaign to fund the National Housing Trust Fund to build, preserve, rehabilitate, and operate rental housing that is affordable for extremely low income households.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Austin Human Rights Commission recommends the Austin City Council include in its federal legislative agenda support for funding for the National Housing Trust Fund.

Date of Approval: October 27, 2014

Record of the vote: Motion by Commissioner Cortez, seconded by Commissioner Lofton, adopted 6-0; Commissioner Brenner absent.

Attest: Jonathan Babiel 11-4-2014