

RESOLUTION NO. 20171012-016

WHEREAS, research shows that policies and practices which criminalize young people, particularly for status offenses, are not causally linked to increases in public safety or reductions in juvenile crime rates; and

WHEREAS, such policies and practices negatively impact local communities and individual youth by perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline, resulting in unnecessary justice system involvement; and

WHEREAS, the school-to-prison pipeline encompasses the systems, policies, practices, laws, and procedures enacted by schools and governments that push young people out of the classroom through the use of exclusionary discipline, law enforcement, and the court system; and

WHEREAS, research shows that the school-to-prison pipeline and justice involvement cause trauma, threaten a young person's ability to succeed academically, and compromise future opportunities in higher education, housing, and employment; and

WHEREAS, youth of color are more likely than others to experience exclusionary school discipline and contact with the justice system though they are not more likely than their peers to misbehave; and

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and gender nonconforming youth are overrepresented in exclusionary school discipline and justice systems nationally, and they experience unique harms when they come in contact with these systems; and

WHEREAS, youth with disabilities are more likely than others to experience exclusionary school discipline and contact with the justice system, even if their behaviors manifest directly from their disabilities; and

WHEREAS, one in five youth lives with a mental health condition, but young people often fail to receive timely interventions, which increases their risk of school dropout and justice involvement; and

WHEREAS, unnecessary youth justice involvement destabilizes the social, emotional, and economic well-being of entire families; and

WHEREAS, policies and practices that reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline and increase unnecessary contact with the justice system can weaken relationships between young people, the community, and justice system officials, including law enforcement officers; and

WHEREAS, youth may engage in behaviors that result in justice involvement for a host of complex reasons, including personal, family, and school factors, such as poverty, parental neglect, homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, bullying, negative school climates, or failure to identify learning disabilities; and

WHEREAS, youth may engage in behaviors that are developmentally appropriate and may simply need the guidance of a trusted adult or the support of peers; and

WHEREAS, effective interventions that ensure the safety and success of youth must address the underlying causes of their behavior, rather than merely punish youth; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers, court officials, and other justice system stakeholders are constrained in how they can respond to young people and are not equipped to assess and address the underlying causes of youth behavior; and

WHEREAS, there are many data-driven, strengths-based practices that can be used to help youth remain safely in their classrooms and communities without resorting to exclusionary discipline and justice system involvement; and

WHEREAS, the well-being, educational attainment, public safety, and economic prosperity of all Austinites is harmed when youth are introduced into the justice system rather than offered evidence-based assistance for the challenges they face; and

WHEREAS, the stakeholder group directed by Resolution No. 20170615-069 to study non-criminal responses to juvenile curfew violations has already begun developing recommendations that cover a broader set of school-to-prison pipeline and youth justice issues; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

It is the goal of the City Council, in collaboration with the community and other governmental entities, to ensure that the City of Austin is a place that supports the well-being, creativity, passion, and leadership potential of young people by advancing evidence-based policies and practices that help youth achieve success in their schools, access supports in their communities, and avoid unnecessary contact with the justice system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The City Council directs the City Manager to provide staff support to initiate a Youth Justice Workgroup tasked with making recommendations on effective policies and

practices that the City could implement to support young people without criminalizing them. The workgroup's charge expires at the end of 2018. The workgroup should build upon the work conducted by the City of Austin/Travis County/ Austin Independent School District Joint Subcommittee's Judicial Supports Task Force's research and recommendations, the Residential and School Mobility Working Group's Integrated Case Management Pilot, as well as the neighborhood Conference-Committee School-Based (NCC-SB) Work Group Report.

The stakeholders participating in the workgroup should include, but not be limited to, participants who studied non-criminal responses to juvenile curfew violations, as directed by Resolution No. 20170615-069. In addition to the members from the juvenile curfew workgroup, the stakeholder process should also include, but not be limited to, the following categories of individuals:

- Austin area youth, including those who have lived experience with exclusionary discipline practices, the school-to-prison pipeline, and other youth justice issues;
- Law enforcement officials;
- Officials from other government entities that regularly interact with youth;
- Criminal and juvenile justice system stakeholders, including court officials, youth attorneys, guardians ad litem, caseworkers, advocates, and experts;
- Youth advocates;
- Disability advocates;
- Advocates for racial equity;
- LGBTQ advocates;
- Mental health experts and service providers;

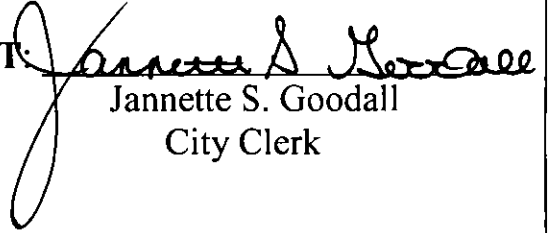
- Representatives from local school districts and open-enrollment charter schools;
- Representatives from the homeschool and private school communities;
- Child welfare advocates and professionals;
- Youth homelessness experts and service providers;
- Substance use disorder professionals;
- Peer support specialists;
- Human trafficking experts;
- Parent representatives, including members of local parent teacher associations; and
- Members of the Austin business community.

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

The City Council directs the City Manager to make an initial report on the progress of forming the workgroup and members' recommendations for initial consultation topics, to both the Council and to the Joint Subcommittee of the City of Austin, Austin Independent School District, and Travis County on or before December 1, 2017. The City Council directs the City Manager to provide subsequent quarterly written reports on the workgroup's activities, recommendations and progress, including actionable items for the Council, for the duration of 2018.

ADOPTED: October 12, 2017

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk