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**WHEREAS**, Travis County Commissioners Court passed a similar resolution on March 11, 2014; and,

24       **WHEREAS**, the Austin/Travis County Sobriety Center Planning Committee  
25 analyzed the costs associated with arrests, bookings, jail time, ambulance transport,  
26 and emergency care for public intoxicants and concluded that serving certain  
27 individuals in a non-emergency setting would be more cost-effective than arresting  
28 and jailing these individuals and would increase sworn officers' time and the  
29 availability of care for people who truly need emergency services; and,

30       **WHEREAS**, on September 22, 2016, the City Council authorized the  
31 creation and incorporation of the Austin/Travis County Sobriety Center Local  
32 Government Corporation (the "Corporation") pursuant to applicable state law; and,

33       **WHEREAS**, the stated mission of the Austin-Travis County Sobriety Center  
34 is to enhance public health and public safety by providing an alternative to the  
35 emergency room and jail for publicly intoxicated individuals to sober up and,  
36 where appropriate, to provide a safe environment to initiate recovery; and,

37       **WHEREAS**, from October 2019 to September 30, 2020, the Sobering Center  
38 screened 1,527 individuals and admitted 1,397 clients, of which 22.19% were  
39 experiencing homelessness, 19.76% were considered at high risk for a substance  
40 use disorder, 35% of individuals were uninsured, and 9.52% were admitted on  
41 more than one occasion; and,

42       **WHEREAS**, of those referred to the Sobering Center, 70% were referred by  
43 law enforcement, 26.5% were referred by EMS, and 3% were referred by the  
44 Sobering Center outreach van; and,

45       **WHEREAS**, the Sobering Center adopts a public health approach to  
46 substance use disorders by using a social work model to connect people to a  
47 continuum of care; and,

48           **WHEREAS**, since the Sobering Center’s inception, Travis County jail  
49 bookings for new Public Intoxication Class C misdemeanors have decreased by  
50 45% since FY 18; and,

51           **WHEREAS**, in 2019, the City of Austin adopted the Meadows Mental Health  
52 Policy Institute’s report identifying and recommending improvements to the first  
53 response system for people experiencing a mental health related emergency,  
54 diverting as many as possible to care and treatment, and in 2020 the Austin City  
55 Council directed that these recommendations be implemented at full scale in 2021;  
56 and,

57           **WHEREAS**, the Austin-Travis County Sobering Center FY 20 Impact  
58 Report indicates an overrepresentation of people with substance use disorders and  
59 mental health disorders in the criminal justice and medical systems; and

60           **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has had a long-standing interest in  
61 diversion programs, including establishing the Downtown Austin Community  
62 Court in 1999 – the first of its kind in Texas – which serves as a way to link  
63 housing and intensive case management services to people experiencing  
64 homelessness for a limited number of municipal court offenses and in a limited  
65 geographic area; and

66           **WHEREAS**, on June 15, 2021, Travis County Commissioners requested that  
67 Travis County staff, specifically the county executives of both Justice & Public  
68 Safety and Health & Human Services, study the potential for and costs of  
69 combining a mental health diversion program with the Sobering Center in  
70 collaboration with the City of Austin and key mental health stakeholders; and,

71           **WHEREAS**, Travis County asserted that, “such a program would

72 complement a variety of diversion programs already established within Travis  
73 County at every level of the criminal justice process and provide more  
74 opportunities for connections to care for those in our community with unmet mental  
75 health needs”; and,

76 **WHEREAS**, both the Travis County Commissioners Court and the Sobering  
77 Center Local Government Corporation Board are currently engaged in discussing  
78 the opportunities associated with a mental health diversion pilot program that could  
79 potentially take place at the Sobering Center; and,

80 **WHEREAS**, the Travis County Commissioners Court has taken action to  
81 initiate a stakeholder process to form an advisory committee to assist with a feasibility  
82 and implementation study for a pilot mental health diversion program with the  
83 Sobering Center; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

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

85 The City of Austin expresses its interest in and support of Travis County’s  
86 initiative to study the opportunities of a mental health diversion pilot program with  
87 the Austin-Travis County Sobering Center. The City Manager is directed to  
88 participate in the stakeholder process as appropriate.

89  
90  
91 **ADOPTED:** \_\_\_\_\_, 2021 **ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

92 Jannette S. Goodall  
93 City Clerk  
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