Resolution regarding Collaboration with the City of Austin to Create a Joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission

WHEREAS, public health is one of the basic elements of our society; and

WHEREAS, the public health system addresses multiple factors that affect health, and there is a dynamic relationship between people and their environment; and

WHEREAS, the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the importance of having policy, plans, programs, and operations ready to address public health crises at a national, state, and local level; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County Commissioners Court (“Commissioners Court”) is authorized to provide for the public health of its residents pursuant to Texas Health and Safety Code Chapters 121 and 122; and

WHEREAS, every resident of Travis County deserves the opportunity to enjoy a healthy life, free of disease and disability, but health disparities persist as a result of unequal socioeconomic factors; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) asserts that reducing health disparities is a major goal of public health; and

WHEREAS, the CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities 2013 Report found that eliminating health disparities for minorities from 2003-2006 would have reduced direct medical expenditures by approximately $229 billion and reduced indirect costs associated with illness and premature death by approximately one trillion dollars: and

WHEREAS, eliminating health disparities is essential to strengthening the nation's and Travis County’s health and economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, there are community advocates, faith-based organizations and residents working to improve public health in the City of Austin and Travis County, there is a need
to advise city and county governments and the community on public health and human services needs and approaches for improvement; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin, through Austin Public Health proposed the creation of an Austin/Travis County Public Health Advisory Commission in 2017; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF TRAVIS COUNTY THAT:

The COUNTY EXECUTIVE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES is directed to collaborate with THE CITY OF AUSTIN on the creation of a joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission (the “Commission”) to:

1. Monitor the public health status of Austin and Travis County.
2. Explore the best/evidence-based public health practices for areas that need improvement and provide recommendations.
3. Inform policy makers, administrators, and public health agencies at-large about the status of the public health system;
4. Provide an annual formal recommendation on the improvement of overall public health programs, projects, regulations, and services within the governing entities in the city and county;
5. Work to address health disparities that impact health outcomes for underserved patients and populations.
6. Gather input from the community on budget and programming recommendations to share with policy makers and health agencies annually, and
7. Report periodically to the Public Health Committee of the Austin City Council and to the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the Commissioners Court, (or the subcommittee designated by the Commissioners Court).
The Commission should be composed of a balanced and diverse membership that represents a broad range of health and human services interests and lived experiences and should be provided with staff support in collaboration with the City of Austin, through Austin Public Health.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The County Executive of Health and Human services is directed to return to the Commissioners Court before ________________ with a formal recommendation, developed collaboratively with the City of Austin, through Austin Public Health, on the creation and implementation of a joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission.