

May 24, 2024

RE: Support for May 30, 2024 Council agenda items 8 and 9 – Execution of interlocal agreements with Integral Care to create Mental Health Diversion pilot oversight board and approve diversion pilot funding

Honorable Mayor Watson and Austin City Council Members,

The Downtown Austin Alliance encourages you to approve items 8 and 9 on the May 30, Austin City Council agenda.

With more than 40% of Travis County Jail inmates experiencing behavioral health problems, the need for a more effective mental health diversion system in Austin/Travis County is essential for improved public safety and offender outcomes; and the City of Austin's participation and financial support for the mental health diversion pilot are essential to its success.

Supporting item 8 will advance a necessary governance structure, and item 9 will provide funding needed to bolster and leverage existing services and facilities to implement the mental health diversion pilot. The pilot will provide immediate alternatives that are needed to prevent many people with behavioral health issues from entering the criminal justice system, and it will help break the cycle of repeat offending due to untreated mental illness.

The mental health diversion pilot is also an important and necessary step to inform the development and future operation of a permanent Travis County Mental Health Diversion Center that will help make our community safer.

We respectfully request your support for items 8 and 9.

Sincerely,



Dewitt Peart
President & CEO

CC: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager

The Downtown Austin Alliance mission:
To create, preserve and enhance the vibe, value and vitality of downtown Austin for everyone.