



Dear City Council Members,

As crime victims and on behalf of the Austin Chapter of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, we urge the Austin City Council to fund a Trauma Recovery Center for our city. Trauma Recovery Centers ensure that crime victims receive the resources needed to heal and be safe, stopping the cycle of harm and violence in communities. In seeking to shift some public safety dollars to solutions that advance long-term improvements, trauma recovery centers are a smart option that will yield significant returns for communities across our city.

There is no more important role of government than protecting the health and safety of its citizens, especially those harmed or placed at greatest risk by violence. By ensuring victims of crime have access to support, the city can help individuals, families and communities heal by addressing trauma. Our experiences have helped us understand directly what research indicates: unaddressed trauma is a contributing factor to continuing cycles of crime and violence. Our City of Austin has the opportunity to address this major challenge.

A 2019 survey of crime victims across Texas revealed that most do not receive critical support for their recovery from our state's public safety system. Yet, four out of every ten Texans surveyed reported being a victim of crime in the last ten years. Many of us experience trauma, stress, anxiety and fear, 7 in 10 violent crime victims have been victims more than once. Despite the overwhelming number of our fellow Texans who have survived crime, 9 in 10 Texas crime victims do not receive support from the state's victim compensation program.. These statistics may be surprising to some, but sadly they are not to us.

The communities in Austin that are most likely to be harmed by violence -- Black, Latinx, LGBTQ, and others that are underserved or marginalized -- often face the greatest barriers to accessing victim services. When the needs of people who have experienced violence, especially multiple traumas, go unaddressed, the physical, emotional, and economic toll can be life-long and ripple far beyond the person directly injured.

This is why the Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) model was developed. It provides comprehensive services for victims of violent crime, including mental health and crisis intervention, as well as assistance navigating the systems survivors often need to interact with to attain health and safety: hospitals, law enforcement, victim compensation, employment, housing, education and others.

Trauma Recovery Centers meet victims where they are by creating individualized plans for healing and support. They provide culturally competent services and are accessible to those who might otherwise fall through the cracks. Their services are provided free-of-charge and are available to ALL crime victims, while being a fraction of the cost of fee-for-service care and more expansive.

Those who have neared completion of services from a Trauma Recovery Center experience decreased mental health symptoms and increased quality of life. They are far more likely to access mental health services, return to work, and cooperate with the justice system to solve crimes (among sexual assault victims, those served by a trauma recovery center are 69 percent more likely to file a report with law enforcement).

As members of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, a national network of over 46,000 crime victims across the nation with multiple chapters in our state, we are focused on making communities safer by stopping cycles of harm and violence. Our fellow members in other states have been successful in partnering with public leaders to launch Trauma Recovery Centers that are now making a difference in communities.

There are currently 39 TRCs across the country, but none in Texas. We urge the City Council to fund our state's first Trauma Recovery in Austin, and offer ourselves as a resource to achieve this important goal.

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Sincerely,

Austin, TX Chapter, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice