



Central Texas Interfaith calls on Austin-Travis officials to invest, address homelessness

by Stephanie Becerra Tuesday, July 20th 2021

Members of the Central Texas Interfaith will hold a press conference on Tuesday to call on Austin City Council to immediately release federal stimulus funds to address homelessness. (Photo: CBS Austin)

Members of the Central Texas Interfaith will hold a press conference on Tuesday to call on Austin City Council to immediately release federal stimulus funds to address homelessness.

There is over \$84 million in federal money tied up in a contingency fund to build emergency and long-term housing for those experiencing homelessness. CTI leaders also plan to call on Travis County commissioners to invest \$100 million in stimulus money for the same purpose.

“We are troubled with the lack of urgency from our elected leaders at a time when citations and arrests are being issued for those without homes, and when even more Central Texans face losing their homes due to evictions and displacement,” said Rev. Michael Floyd of Central Texas Interfaith. “The shell game needs to stop, and both the city and county need to act now.”

Before the Austin City Council's summer recess, it voted to place the \$84 million from the American Rescue Plan in a contingency fund and only to be spent if other public agencies and public actors invest another \$200 million.

It's unclear what will happen to the fund if other partners fail to reach their goal.

Travis County staff so far has recommended \$325,000.

CTI has met over the past month with the City and County officials on this matter.

“Every day money sits in a contingency fund is a day that those experiencing homelessness suffer and potentially risk death,” said Carlota Garcia, a leader with Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church and a CTI Leader. “We saw the City double the homestead exemption, without hesitation, but when it comes to the most vulnerable they say they can't act until another \$200 million is raised from still undesignated sources. We’ve been waiting long enough, and it’s time for the City and County to implement a comprehensive plan to release those funds now. These are our federal tax dollars with a limited shelf life.

City Council will return from its summer hiatus Thursday, July 22nd to begin discussing the budget. Travis County Commissioners Court will meet today to do the same.