ORDINANCE NO. _______________

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING EARNED SICK TIME STANDARDS IN THE CITY, CREATING A CIVIL PENALTY, AND CREATING AN OFFENSE.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

Part 1. FINDINGS.

(A) The council finds that most workers in the City of Austin will at some time during each year need limited time off from work to care for their own health and safety needs or the health and safety needs of a close family member.

(B) The council further finds that denying earned sick time to employees:

(1) is unjust;

(2) is detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City; and

(3) contributes to employee turnover and unemployment, and harms the local economy.

The council further finds that it is within the police power and the responsibility of the City to remedy the problems enumerated in parts (A) and (B) of this Section.

Part 2. Title 4 of the City Code is amended by adding a new Chapter 4-19 to read:

CHAPTER 4-19. EARNED SICK TIME.

§4-19-1. DEFINITIONS.

In this Chapter:

(A) EARNED SICK TIME means a period of paid leave from work accrued by an employee in accord with this Chapter.
(B) EEO/FHO means the City of Austin Equal Employment Opportunity/ Fair Housing Office.

(C) EMPLOYEE means an individual who performs at least 80 hours of work for pay within the City of Austin in a calendar year for an employer, including work performed through the services of a temporary or employment agency.

(D) EMPLOYER means any person, company, corporation, firm, partnership, labor organization, non-profit organization or association that pays an employee to perform work for the employer and exercises control over the employee’s wages, hours and working conditions. The term does not include:

1. the United States;
2. a corporation wholly owned by the government of the United States;
3. the state or a state agency; or
4. a political subdivision of the state.

(E) FAMILY MEMBER means an employee’s spouse, child, parent, or any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

§4-19-2. EARNED SICK TIME STANDARDS.

(A) An employer shall grant an employee one hour of earned sick time for every 30 hours worked for the employer.

(B) Earned sick time shall accrue starting at the commencement of employment or the date this Chapter is effective, whichever is later.

(C) An employee may request to use earned sick time from an employer as soon as it is accrued.

(D) An employee may request earned sick time from an employer for an absence from the employee’s scheduled work time caused by:
(1) the employee’s physical or mental illness or injury, preventative medical or health care, or health condition; or

(2) the care of a family member’s physical or mental illness, preventative medical or health care, injury, or health condition; or

(3) an absence necessary to seek medical attention or to participate in legal or court ordered action related to an incident of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking involving the employee or employee’s family member.

(E) An employer may adopt reasonable verification procedures to establish that an employee’s request for earned sick time meets the requirements of part (D) for a request to use earned sick time for more than three consecutive work days.

(F) An employer shall provide earned sick time for an employee’s absence from the employee’s scheduled work time if the employee has unused earned sick time. An employer may not prevent an employee from using earned sick time for an unforeseeable qualified absence as established in part (D).

(G) An employer is not required to provide more than 64 hours of earned sick time to an employee in a calendar year. All unused earned sick time up to 64 hours shall be carried over to the following year. An employer may inform employees that leave requested in excess of what has been accrued by an employee will not be paid.

(H) An employer shall provide an employee with earned sick time that meets the requirements under this Section in an amount up to the employee’s unused earned sick time. The employer shall pay earned sick time in an amount equal to what the employee would have earned if the employee had worked the scheduled work time, exclusive of any overtime premium, tips, or commissions, but no less than the State minimum wage.

(I) An employer shall provide in writing to each employee the amount of earned sick time accrued and available to such employee on no less than a monthly basis. For the period required for maintenance of records under Title 29, Section 516(a), Code of Federal Regulations, an employer shall maintain records establishing the amount of earned sick time accrued and used by each covered employee.
(J) An employer may not require an employee to find a replacement to cover the hours of earned sick time as a condition of using earned sick time.

(K) Neither the amount of accrued sick time nor the right to use accrued sick time shall be affected by an employee’s transfer to a different facility, location, division, or job position of the same employer. An employer shall reinstate accrued sick time for a separated employee who is rehired within 12 months.

(L) An employer may provide paid leave benefits that exceed the requirements of this Chapter. An employer with a policy that makes paid time available to an employee in an amount sufficient to meet the accrual, purpose, and usage requirements as prescribed in this section, is not required to provide additional earned sick time to an employee.

§4-19-3. SIGNAGE REQUIRED.

(A) An employer shall display a sign describing the requirements of this ordinance in at least English and Spanish in a conspicuous place or places where notices to employees are customarily posted. An employer is not required to post such signage until the City of Austin makes such signage available publicly on its website.

(B) EEO/FHO shall prescribe by rule the size, content, and location of signs required under Subsection (A) of this Section.

§4-19-4. RETALIATION PROHIBITED. An employer may not transfer, demote, discharge, suspend, reduce hours, or directly threaten these actions will be taken against an employee for requesting or using earned sick time, or for reporting a violation or participating in an administrative proceeding under this Chapter.

§4-19-5. ADMINISTRATION.

(A) The EEO/FHO shall:

(1) educate employers and employees about this Chapter;

(2) receive and investigate complaints, including anonymous complaints, alleging a violation of this Chapter;
(3) enforce this Chapter;

(4) seek voluntary compliance with this Chapter before collecting a civil penalty; and

(5) adopt rules necessary to implement this Chapter.

(B) A complaint alleging a violation of this Chapter must be filed with the EEO/FHO by or on behalf of an aggrieved employee within two years from the date of the violation.

(C) If the EEO/FHO finds after investigation of a timely complaint that a violation of this Chapter has occurred:

(1) the EEO/FHO shall assess a civil penalty up to $500 against the employer for each violation of this Chapter, and shall provide written notice of the assessment to the employer; and

(2) the EEO/FHO shall seek voluntary compliance from the employer to remedy any violation of this Chapter. If voluntary compliance is not achieved within 10 business days following the employer’s receipt of the written civil penalty assessment, the employer shall be liable to the City for the amount of the assessed civil penalty.

(D) This Section does not create a criminal offense.

§4-19-6. INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS.

(A) The director of the EEO/FHO may subpoena records or testimony relevant to the investigation of a complaint under this Chapter. A subpoena shall:

(1) be directed to a person with knowledge or information relevant to a complaint under this Chapter, or to a custodian of records relevant to a complaint under this Chapter;

(2) be in writing and signed by the director of the EEO/FHO;

(3) identify the records or testimony to be produced under the subpoena;
(4) direct the person to whom it is issued to produce the records or provide the testimony identified in the subpoena at a specific place and time, which shall be not earlier than 10 business days from the date of service of the subpoena;

(5) identify the individual complaint made under this Chapter to which the subpoena relates;

(6) state that the subpoena is issued under the authority of this Chapter for purposes of investigating a complaint under this Chapter;

(7) state that failure to comply with the subpoena is an offense and punishable as a Class C misdemeanor under this Code; and

(8) be served on the person to whom it is directed by certified mail or personal delivery.

(B) A person commits an offense if the person fails to comply with a subpoena issued and served on the person as provided in Part (A). The offense is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor as provided in Section 1-1-99 of this Code. A culpable mental state is not a necessary element of the offense.

(C) The EEO/FHO may inform employees at a work site of any investigation of a potential violation of this Chapter being conducted at that work site.

Part 3. For a violation of this Chapter that occurs within the first three months after the effective date of this ordinance, the EEO/FHO shall issue a notice to the employer that a civil penalty may be assessed for a violation that occurs after three months of the effective date.

Part 4. The council directs the city manager to design and provide a multilingual public education campaign to inform employers and residents of the requirements of Chapter 4-19, such as a website with best practices for employers, and an educational outreach strategy for informing employees and residents of the earned sick time ordinance.

Part 5. Except as provided in Part 3 and Part 4, this ordinance takes effect on May____, 2018.