

## PROCLAMATION

**WHEREAS**, in 2017 the U.S. Census Department reported an estimated 143,362 children living in Williamson County, Texas and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (CPS) conducted 3,113 child abuse investigations in Williamson County confirming 596 to be cases of child abuse and neglect; and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center forensically interviewed 661 children that year; AND

**WHEREAS**, every child deserves the security of a stable, loving, and nurturing home – we recognize the importance of all Texans working together each day in defense of our most valuable resource consisting of those that are the most vulnerable among us – our children, AND

**WHEREAS**, we cannot lose sight of the importance of the entire community in preventing child abuse and neglect, and it is critically important for our children to have parents who care for their physical, intellectual, and emotional needs, but we also must acknowledge the friends, neighbors, educators, and faith leaders who help in promoting the well-being of children; AND

**WHEREAS**, we are especially grateful for foster and adoptive parents who graciously open their homes and lives to children in need of love and support, and we extend our deepest respect and gratitude to the professionals, volunteers, and organizations who work tirelessly to protect at-risk children and to care for those who have tragically experienced the traumas of abuse or neglect; AND

**WHEREAS**, prevention remains the best defense for our children and families; and effective child abuse prevention activities succeed because of the meaningful connections and partnerships created between child welfare, education, health, community-based and faith-based organizations, businesses, and law enforcement agencies; AND

**WHEREAS**, all adults, 18 and over, are considered “mandatory reporters” in the State of Texas and are charged with officially reporting any and all suspected cases of abuse to the 1-800-252-5400 Abuse Hotline so that local professionals can properly investigate and intervene in a timely manner to keep children safe from abuse in Williamson County; AND

**WHEREAS**, Texas Children's Advocacy Centers were created to work with government agencies in a unified effort to investigate cases of child abuse in a manner that reduces trauma to young victims; and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, a non-profit organization founded in 1997 to serve all cities in Williamson County, exists to provide a child friendly, safe place to disclose child abuse, reduce emotional trauma for children and their non-offending family members, and extend professional services that protect the integrity of an investigation; and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center has provided forensic interviews for more than 10,000 children since its inception; AND

**WHEREAS**, the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, Williamson County Sheriff's Department, our Municipal Police Departments, the Department of Family & Protective Services, C.A.S.A. volunteers, EMS personnel, the County Attorney's Office, the District Attorney's Office, Judges, foster parents, teachers, and others work together and play a critical role in the prevention and healing of abused and neglected children in our community to ensure that they have the opportunity to grow up in a safe, loving, and permanent home; AND

**WHEREAS**, we must never lose sight of those who have suffered from the terrors of child abuse and neglect and who continue to suffer from its devastating psychological and physical impacts;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved that we, the Commissioners' Court of Williamson County, Texas, honor the courageous survivors of abuse and neglect and hold in our hearts those cruelly taken from us; and renew our resolve to eradicate abuse and neglect from our homes and our community, and pledge our commitment to preserving the innocence and safety of our children by proclaiming April 2019 as:

### **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION MONTH**

in Williamson County, Texas and hereby recognize the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center and all its partners for outstanding service to protect the unprotected and encourage all citizens to be vigilant in recognizing and reporting child abuse in Williamson County, Texas.

**THIS THE 16TH DAY OF APRIL 2019**

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**JUDGE BILL GRAVELL**