



August 5, 2019

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty
1221 SW Fourth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Dear City of Portland Commissioners (My Commissioners):

My name is Marcus C. Mundy, and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) which, as you are all very aware, is an alliance of 19 culturally-specific community based organizations with representation from the following communities of color: African, African American, Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic. For almost 20 years, the CCC has led a collective racial justice effort to improve outcomes for communities of color through policy analysis and advocacy, culturally-appropriate data and research, environmental justice and leadership development in communities of color.

I am writing in unfettered support of the City of Portland's Office of Community and Civic Life (Civic Life) proposed changes to the city code (specifically City Code Chapter 3.96) governing the City's public engagement programs, district coalitions and neighborhood associations. It is my candid, experienced belief that these changes will make the city that you Commissioners serve a better, more participatory and more inclusive place, and the government that you lead a more responsive and open entity. Such inclusion is a goal that both of our entities share.

For your information and for full disclosure, I participated on Committee 3.96, which has met for almost a year to hear from residents, citizens, renters, homeowners, immigrants, neighborhood association representatives, newcomers to Portland and countless others on how best to serve the residents of Portland, and how to make City services accessible and welcoming to ALL of them. I was honored to have served and to have participated and contributed to such an open, honest and inclusive process. I share that to remind you that I have heard and read all of the testimony during these hours and hours of meetings, and have firsthand knowledge of the earnest deliberations that went into each suggested change.

Each proposed change reflects the committee's desire to include more residents into the processes of government and, despite a surfeit of misinformation to the contrary, does not remove neighborhood associations from participation or consideration. What it specifically does, however, is to extend the privilege and right of civic engagement to more residents.

You Commissioners representing Portland reflect a large swath of the diversity of professions and life experiences our City hopes to continue to represent: you are entrepreneurs and civil rights activists and attorneys, you are mental health and financial professionals and environmental enthusiasts, you are immigrants and leaders. What the proposed code change seeks as an outcome is to continue to have such diversity, and more, reflected in all the apparatus of government. And all of your past and current professions, without exception, are healthier when more individuals are encouraged and invited to participate.



I hope that the Communities of Color can count on your unanimous vote for inclusion, for participation, and for sharing the power that has been vested for 45 years in a small cadre of entities and individuals. You will be voting for a much broader and, frankly, much more representative group of Portlanders that reflect our evolving demographics.

Nothing about these changes is inherently controversial, or inherently radical, or has anything inherently to fear. The changes simply reflect inevitable change, which is part of government and being responsive to the needs of your residents.

I would ask you to reflect upon the question, "To whom is the code change controversial?". If your answer is that it is controversial to those who see their longtime privilege and economic benefit being supplanted by a fairer, more balanced distribution of opportunities and decision making, then your vote should be clear and you should sleep well the night you decide.

As this entire issue centers around civic engagement, and government, and who can participate in the rights and privileges of society, I will leave you with two quotes from two of my favorite folks, and likely quotes all too familiar to you Commissioners, that I believe are apt:

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Frederick Douglass

"For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every [person] with piercing familiarity. This "Wait!" has almost always meant "Never."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

I would ask you to consider the legacy you wish to leave, and be proud of, when your time as Commissioners is done. This respectful demand from your citizens is being made. Respectfully, this change needs to happen. The answer must no longer be later, or never.

Your City of Portland leaders in the Office of Community and Civic Life presided over an open, clear, participatory and well communicated process. The conclusions of the dozens of folks representing all manner of Portland constituencies in this process wore all of their respective hats and brought all of their experiences to the table. The closing act of these months of deliberations was a resounding, lopsided vote in favor of the proposed changes.

You were elected to come to your own conclusions, which I respect. But I trust that you will consider and, hopefully, honor the recommendations made by this varied, volunteer body of Portlanders, and vote for the adoption of City Code Chapter 3.96 changes as proposed.

Thank you for your time and attention, and thanks for the work you continue to do for Portland.

Warm regards,


Marcus C. Mundy
Executive Director

"Belonging or being fully human means more than having access. Belonging entails being respected at a basic level that includes the right to both co-create and make demands upon society."

- *From dr. john a. powell, Director, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society (attached)*