

November 12, 2021

To: Honorable Nathan Fletcher, Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Nora Vargas, Vice Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Terra Lawson-Remer, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Joel Anderson, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Jim Desmond, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Ms. Ellen Nash, Chair, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

On May 19, 2020, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors established the Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission to promote positive human relations, respect, and the integrity of every individual regardless of gender, religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or citizenship status.

Today, there are 24 Commissioners; while the vast majority are appointed as individuals by a member of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, there are a few seats reserved for organizations that are so integral to the mission of the Commission, that an organization, rather than an individual, receives a dedicated seat on the Commission, outlined in the founding bylaws. The San Diego LGBT Community Center is one such organization; our mission is to enhance and sustain the health and well-being of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, nonbinary, immigrant, and HIV communities to the betterment of our entire San Diego region. Through this intentional design choice, in furtherance of its mission, the Commission ensured that San Diego's leading LGBTQ organization would have a continuous seat on the Commission.

The Commissioners often engage in robust dialog and passionate debate; though not all Commissioners may always agree, we have conducted ourselves with respect for each other and in service to our mission: to further our San Diego County region by promoting positive human relations, respect, and the integrity of every individual. For 18 months, Commissioners have conducted themselves in accordance with these values of respect, *until our meeting on November 9, 2021*. Then, the Commission discussed an agenda item from Commissioner Julia Legaspi, a longstanding leader in our LGBTQ community, regarding a recommitment to end discrimination and transphobia by amplifying the visibility and voices of our transgender community.

Commissioner Dennis Hodges then abstained from a vote to take action to support our transgender community. When asked why he chose to abstain, Commissioner Hodges commented that he welcomed the opportunity to explain why: he is a man of God and believes adamantly that "transgendered" are "sinners" and "an abomination to God," and that he could never and will never support this community. Many on the Commission spoke up to voice our collective outrage, hurt, and shock at this hateful language from a fellow Commissioner, his direct attack on the LGBTQ community, and his blatant disrespect for our two transgender commissioners present in the meeting (Commissioners Legaspi and Roberts).

On November 9, subsequent to the public meeting, Commissioner Hodges doubled down on his hateful language in a letter to Chair Ellen Nash:

"As you know, my response was that I thought that one who engages in Transgender Behaviors, that behavior is an Abomination before the Lord. My understanding of a Transgender is a Man dresses and behaves as a Woman and Vice Versa." He goes on to say of our transgender community: "not only is this abomination stated in Deuteronomy but it is stated in Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:18-32, 1st Corinthians 6:9,10 and the fact that when men and women embrace obviously other-gendered expressions of identity it is a disgrace." In referring to the full LGBTQ community, he states that "those who commit such acts or should I say Practice such Behaviors



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in this manner are making immoral and UNGODLY decisions.” He then says that he “will not tolerate the sexual behaviors in my presence.”

While we believe in Commissioner Hodges’ right to vote how he chooses, his right to free speech, and to freedom of religion, his persistent discriminatory and hateful comments are simply antithetical to the mission of this Commission and *disqualifying of his appointed position*. We were called to serve our region in furtherance of human rights for all, and it is clear that because Commissioner Hodges stands vocally and fervently against our LGBTQ community, he cannot serve this Commission’s mission. Therefore, we respectfully call for his immediate resignation.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Caroline (Cara) Dessert, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer, The San Diego LGBT Community Center
Member, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Commissioner Nicole Murray-Ramirez
Vice Chair, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Commissioner Julia Legaspi
Member, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Commissioner Gina Roberts
Member, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Commissioner Alex C. Villafuerte
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Commissioner Tammy Gillies
Regional Director, ADL San Diego
Member, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Commissioner Pedro Anaya
Member, Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission