

Letter supporting Community Proposal for City of Spokane Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion

November 17, 2021

Dear Mayor Nadine Woodward and Spokane City Council Members,

The undersigned organizations and individuals are writing to ask you to support the Spokane Human Rights Commission's resolution approving our collectively developed [proposal](#) for an adequately staffed Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion in the 2022 City of Spokane budget.

It's excellent news that the work of the Office of Civil Rights Task Force is beginning to bear fruit and that the City is starting to consider an Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion as an indispensable part of good governance and an inclusive future in the City of Spokane. And we appreciate the Spokane Human Rights Commission's support of our proposal for the creation of the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion.

We are very glad that Jerrall Haynes has been hired as the City of Spokane's first Civil Rights Program Coordinator, and that one of his primary roles is to create the Office of Civil Rights. This is an important step forward, but one person can't solve the complex problems of discrimination and inequities in the City of Spokane. If we look at the most explicit acts of hate, we can see the urgent need for the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion:

- (1) The rising number of hate crimes in Spokane over the last few years.
- (2) The active presence of white nationalist groups that got Spokane on international news.
- (3) The racist and Anti-Semitic incidents at the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, the Salish School, and Temple Beth Shalom that targeted entire communities.

These high-profile hate incidents should be a warning to all Spokanites that subtler forms of discrimination remain normalized in our community. These issues are multifaceted and systemic, requiring dedicated resources, consistent policies and procedures, and expertise in subjects ranging from housing and employment regulations to victim support in cases of hate incidents. As the Government Local Offices dedicated to Rights, Inclusion and Equity (GLORIE) Benchmark Study submitted to the Spokane Human Rights Commission in April 2021 shows, a city of our size needs a permanent, well-resourced team in place to address ongoing civil rights and equity issues.

A multi-faceted Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion is needed in order to:

1. Reduce discrimination and hate crimes;
2. Improve community engagement with historically marginalized and underrepresented communities in decision-making and policy implementation processes;

3. Improve equity through training and education of City government staff as well as community organizations; and
4. Ensure accountability in these processes throughout City government.

Based on findings from the GLORIE report we proposed adopting the model from Des Moines, Iowa. Des Moines has a comparable population size and shares other characteristics with Spokane. Des Moines also uses a modest model in terms of staffing and funding levels, compared to other cities in the GLORIE report. To effectively implement this proposal, we recommend that 6 positions are created and fully funded. As Spokane grows, our community has a critical opportunity to ensure that we grow equitably. Spokane is behind other cities around the country of a similar size by not having an Office of Civil Rights. Racism and discrimination hurt our city's reputation and our efforts to recruit and retain diverse talents. We will lose our economic competitiveness if we fail to catch up with the expectations of the present time.

We want a commitment from our city to create a fully staffed and adequately funded Office of Civil Rights. The community stands behind Jerrall Haynes and we look forward to supporting his work; yet there are urgent needs in our community that require more than one person can provide. We recognize that it will take a few years to build an office that meets these needs, and that's why we must start the work now. We ask you to fund the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion in the City of Spokane's 2022 budget.

Respectfully,

350 Spokane
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) Spokane Chapter
Carl Maxey Center
Congregation Emanu-El
DH
Disability Rights Washington
Faith Action Network
Fuse Washington
Gonzaga Asian American Union
Greater Spokane Progress
Greensage, LLC
Health Equity Circle
Hispanic Business/Professional Association
I Did The Time
Inland Imaging
Latinos En Spokane
League of Women Voters of Spokane Area
Legacy Learners
Muslims for Community, Action and Support
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

Norton Strategic Consulting
Odyssey Youth Movement
Pacific Islander Community Association of Washington
Peace & Justice Action League of Spokane
Planned Parenthood Of Greater Washington Of North Idaho
Reimagine Spokane
Rodkey Pottery
SCAR (Spokane Community Against Racism)
SEIU 775
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW
Social Justice Circle -- Inland Northwest Unitarian Universalist Community
Spectrum Center Spokane
Spokane County Bar Association, Indian Law Section
Spokane County Human Rights Task Force
Spokane Immigrants Rights Coalition
Spokane Jewish Coalition for Social Justice
Spokane Local 1221, AFSCME
Spokane NAACP
Spokane Regional Labor Council
TeamChild Spokane County
Temple Beth Shalom, Spokane WA
Tenants Union of Washington State
The Arc of Spokane
The Native American Alliance for Policy & Action (TNAAPA)
Unemployment Law Project
United Nations Association (UNA) Spokane
WA Tools for Change
West Central Development Project
Western States Center
WSU College of Medicine Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA)
WSU College of Medicine Student National Medical Association (SNMA)
WSU Environmental Justice Student Interest Group
YWCA Spokane