



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
215 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 686-2181
FAX (215) 686-2180

JAMES F. KENNEY
Mayor

September 30, 2016

Dear Members of Black and Brown Workers Collective,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation for your action last week. It has provided government, business and community groups alike an important opportunity to discuss whether our current approach to addressing racism within the LGBT community is as effective as it could be. I am personally and professionally committed to combatting systems of oppression based on racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia and all forms of bias and discrimination. With that in mind, I would now like to respond to the five issues you raised in the letter delivered to the Office of LGBT Affairs on Friday, September 23.

In response to your first request that “the office of LGBTQ Affairs compensate Black and Brown LGBTQIA community members who are advising the office on issues of racism in the gayborhood,” please know that no community members who advise City agencies and departments in an informal capacity receive compensation. This policy is entirely driven by the City’s financial constraints. However, City agencies and departments rely on community advisers to inform our work so we are able to better serve the communities they represent. Our government is meant to work for the citizens it serves and we are deeply grateful to the dedicated community members who help make that possible.

In response to your second and third declarations that “there needs to be other stakeholders at the table to discuss racism in the gayborhood other than Philly Black Pride,” including “Black and Brown LGBTQIA housing insecure youth, youth who engage in sex work and youth who are not represented in major organizations” I want to first recognize the efforts of the community members and organizations who have worked over the past year, and for decades leading up to last year, to address racial discrimination in the Gayborhood. As Director of the Office of LGBT Affairs, part of my role is to attend community meetings, listen, and to offer the support and assistance of my Office. Philly Black Pride helped organize a community-led initiative last Fall and the Office will continue to support these efforts and all those involved in any way it can. As a partner in this important work, the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations will host a public hearing on October 25, 2016 on racism and discrimination in the LGBTQ community. The Office of LGBT Affairs will be reaching out to individuals, stakeholders, and community groups to ensure they’re aware of the meeting and encourage them to attend and submit testimony. [The meeting will be held at 6pm, October 25 at Liberty Resources, 112 N. 8th Street, Suite 600.](#) Contact PCHR for more information pchr@phila.gov 215-686-4670.

In response to your fourth declaration that “the office of LGBTQ Affairs needs to formally name intersectionality as it pertains to Black and Brown LGBTQIA identities” and acknowledge “that this makes us more vulnerable in LGBTQIA spaces,” I am and continue to be committed to addressing the unique, varied and layered issues facing black and brown LGBTQIA individuals. The Office has focused

much of its energy on working with our prisons, police force and other government departments, agencies and employees to address intersectionality and the compounded danger and discrimination members of our community face along lines of race, gender identity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status within and by these institutions. The Office has been instrumental in the creation of laws and policies that protect community throughout the City and within City institutions. From the Executive Order implementing the Prison Rape Elimination Act, to the passage of legislation making all single-occupancy bathrooms gender neutral, to the ballot initiative to change our City's Home Rule Charter to ensure LGBT people and issues have a permanent seat at the table, these are some of the examples of how the Office has worked to build structural change within government in this last year alone. Additionally, the Office works to create LGBT competent policies and directives throughout City departments and agencies, trains staff and officers on these accountability documents, and assists the public in filing complaints when these policies are violated. From Police to Corrections Officers to Sheriffs to District Attorneys and Judges, ensuring that those who have institutional power are aware of and accountable for their treatment of LGBT people is paramount. Beyond those trainings that occur within government departments and agencies, the Office has also provided LGBT competency training to Mummer organizations and leaders in response to concerns over racist, xenophobic, homophobic and transphobic parade costumes and performances. The Director of the Office also serves as an advisor on boards throughout the city, Commonwealth and nation, including PHL Diversity, Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Center City Crime Victim Services, CHOP Gender Clinic, the Governor's LGBT working group and the Department of Justice, to ensure LGBT issues are front and center considerations in these disparate industries and institutions.

Going forward, the Office will be working towards three critical initiatives to improve services to LGBT people throughout the City. First, the Office will be asking the Mayor to establish a Commission on LGBT Affairs to work with the Director to address critical issues facing LGBT people in Philadelphia. Second, the Office will be working to establish an LGBT Employee Resource Group for all 30,000 City of Philadelphia government employees to allow employees to organize and build a more inclusive government within their respective places of work. Third, the Office will be working to implement LGBT competency training for all City of Philadelphia employees. These three systematic builds will help to further institutionalize LGBT needs and concerns in government and provide a basis for collaboration across departments and agencies that focus on minority and underserved communities.

I look forward to continuing these efforts and to working with community partners to further address intersectionality in the LGBT community.

While I have also read and considered your concerns with Philly Black Pride's "4 point all-inclusive plan," I believe those issues are best addressed to Philly Black Pride. This plan was created by Philly Black Pride, in consultation with community organizers and following last year's town halls, and not at the Office's request. The Office applauds and supports all organizations and community members working to dismantle racism and will continue to help spread awareness of the legal mechanisms in place to address racial discrimination.

Thank you again for expressing your thoughts and concerns. I look forward to a productive relationship with BBWC moving forward.

Sincerely,



Helen Fitzpatrick
Director, Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs