



December 12, 2016

Mayor Spencer
Alameda City Councilmembers
City Hall
Santa Clara Ave.
Alameda, CA 94501

Re: Recommendations from SSHRB's Public Hearing held on November 29, 2016

Dear Mayor Spencer and City Councilmembers:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Social Service Human Relations Board (SSHRB) to share comments and recommendations it received from the Alameda community at a public hearing held on November 29, 2016.

As you know, Alameda Municipal Code Section 2-11 implements provisions of the city Charter and sets forth the duties of SSHRB, an advisory board to the City Council. Among other things, the Municipal Code states: "It is the intent of the City Council in enacting this section to create an environment which will encourage and bring about mutual understanding, respect, and goodwill among groups of people in the community and to improve social services in the community."

Consistent with these duties, in mid-July of this year, members of the Alameda community contacted SSHRB voicing their concerns about the negative impact that recent racially and bias-motivated events across our nation might have on our community. At its July 27, 2016 meeting, the Board authorized me to draft a letter sharing these concerns and offering the Board's assistance in organizing and facilitating a community-wide dialogue. In late August, I sent the letter to the media and various community groups advocating for non-discrimination and social justice. The Board received a number of positive responses to this letter, and in light of community actions following the November presidential election,

including student and community-wide protests and vigils, and racist graffiti at one of our elementary schools, I called a special meeting of the Board. The purpose of the meeting was to invite Alamedans to share their concerns and to make recommendations about future events or activities that may foster good will in the Alameda community.

More than eighty were in attendance at the Public Hearing, including Mayor Spencer, City Councilmember Tony Daysog, AUSD Superintendent Sean McPhetridge, City Manager Jill Keimach, Alameda Police Chief Paul Roller, Alameda Public Information Officer Sarah Henry, and Debbie Potter, Alameda Community Development Director. Members of our faith-based community also attended, including Dr. Laura Rose, Sister Pat Nagle, and Rev. Dot Lundgren. Members of the Alameda PTA organizations attended, as well as members of Alamedans Coming Together, members of the AUSD Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) roundtable, parents, and many concerned Alamedans.

Public comment reflected a very real concern for the general welfare of our residents and a desire that our community leaders take specific steps to foster good will, tolerance, and acceptance in Alameda. Many people shared personal concerns about certain segments of our community: our children, seniors, immigrants, minority populations, refugees, and our LGBTQ community, among others. Members also praised the overwhelming response of tolerance and love of the Alameda community to recent acts of racist graffiti at Edison Elementary School, the supportive response of the Alameda Police Department to the student-lead walk outs follow the national election, and to the power of the “Everyone Belongs Here” campaign created by AUSD LGBTQ Alameda youth and shared in our schools and throughout the community.

Some community members shared personal stories about our youth who are fearful about what our new national leadership will mean, especially for families of color, our same-sex families, and undocumented and other immigrant families. A constant theme throughout public comment was the need to encourage and support meaningful, on-going communication between our diverse community stakeholders, city government, residents, schools, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and PTA groups, to name a few.

At the conclusion of the special meeting, SSHRB voted to: 1) refer the matter to the Human Relations Workgroup (Chair Audrey Hyman, Mark Sorensen,

and Christine Chilcott) of the SSHRB; 2) authorize the workgroup to have SSHRB support/co-sponsor activities that are consistent with its mission, and 3) to work with the President of SSHRB to draft a letter to the City Council conveying the input received from the public.

Therefore, input received from the public at this meeting included the following ideas:

- to encourage and facilitate the inclusion of the “Everyone Belongs Here” poster into Alameda businesses, faith-communities , and other public places; to ensure that Alameda young adults have a voice and responsibility in this endeavor; and to have the City provide financial support of these efforts;
- support and facilitate an honest conversation about the housing crisis with public meetings, the fall-out of negative rhetoric from the recent L1/M1 campaigns, and acknowledge the impact of the negative campaign efforts from both sides on the Alameda community;
- create a database on hate crimes and bias-motivated acts, located on the City’s website, that the public could access with accurate updates including information on community responses to these acts;
- engage disenfranchised communities, including the Muslim community, so that these community members are included in community events and are invited to participate;
- improve ways that our community communicates with each other and updates each other with newsworthy community events, either through social media or through local TV;
- educate and mentor community populations that are underrepresented on City Boards and Commissions, so that our local government adequately reflects the actual make-up of our community;
- engage our City Council to be ready to participate with a prepared response to hate crimes with specific actions like an immediate proclamation, vigil, or other community event; consider updating the city’s Hate Incident Response Team guidelines for this purpose;
- Have Council consider designating Alameda a Sanctuary City via local ordinance, and also pass a resolution, in response to the election of Donald

Trump, similar to the one passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on November 8, 2016.

- Have the City support AUSD, local PTAs, and other programs serving youth to provide community forums on the impact of parent conversations in the home and how to ensure that the conversations occurring at home are appropriate and safe for our children to hear.

On behalf of SSHRB, we were honored to be a part of this important conversation and to provide a forum for our community to come together and strategize ways to move forward. We request that a joint meeting of the Council and SSHRB be set for early 2017, consistent with our Charter, to discuss, prioritize, and implement ideas the Board received at its Public Hearing on November 29, 2016. We look forward to working with you on these critical and time-sensitive issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Williams, President
Social Service Human Relations Board