



5200 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, Virginia 23508

hamptonroadspride.org

October 22, 2019

Honorable Mayor Robert M. Dyer
And Members of City Council
2401 Courthouse Drive – Building 1
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Re: Request for Action Involving Human Rights Commissioner's Statements

Honorable Mayor Dyer and Members of City Council:

Commissioner LaKendrick Coburn EI is a City Council appointed member of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. He attended his first Human Rights Commission meeting in May of 2019.

On October 21, 2019 in social media posts to facebook under the name "Kenick EI", the Commissioner categorically claimed that:

- Homosexuality is "a mental illness and should be treated as such"
- Homosexuality is "an abomination to the Human Race"
- Homosexuality will lead to the extinction of humanity
- The use of public restrooms by transgender people places children at risk of harm through sexual predation

These statements inflict a deep betrayal of trust to the relationship between the Human Rights Commission and citizens of Virginia Beach who are members of the LGBT and allied communities.

The Board of Directors of Hampton Roads Pride recognizes the rights to practice beliefs and express opinions. The fact that the Commissioner chose to publicly and repeatedly express the statements above in a manner which has the potential to incite discrimination is not without consequence and calls into question his current fitness to serve effectively on the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission.

It is reasonable and proper that the citizens of Virginia Beach should expect those who serve on the City's Human Rights Commission to understand the tenets of universal Human Rights and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Commission and which reflect the mission and values of the City of Virginia Beach.

In light of this offensive public dialogue, the Board of Directors of Hampton Roads Pride request:

- An evaluation of the vetting process for all City appointees to Boards and Commissions be conducted as soon as practicable resulting in a public report of recommendations for any identified changes to the process

- All appointees of City Council be required to complete inclusion and diversity training from a well-trained and well-reputed source
- The Human Rights Commission (HRC) engage with members of the LGBT and allied communities in public discussion and in alignment with the work of the HRC to “work toward mutual understanding, respect of all citizens and advocacy of human rights for all people.”

The mission of Hampton Roads Pride is to unite the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) and allied communities in support of inclusion, dignity and equality of all people. The Board of Directors genuinely looks forward to continuing our work with the City of Virginia Beach to improve Municipal Equality Index scores of the City’s governing body, to host events which celebrate diversity and to create a more inclusive community for all who choose to live and conduct business in the wonderful City of Virginia Beach.

We are disappointed, saddened and disheartened by these remarks since until now, Hampton Roads Pride has asserted the vision and work of the HRC as vital to the equality of all people. Any failure to address this unacceptable behavior, threatens to diminish the credibility of the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Directors

Hampton Roads Pride