

Dear Mayor Marlin,

Ending unlawful discrimination has been a priority in Urbana for decades. But for over eight months, the Urbana Human Relations Office and Commission have gone without a half-time Officer, and we have been without a full-time Officer since 2017. Elizabeth has done a great job handling contractor approvals and incoming human rights complaints, but she has a full-time job without these duties. We appreciate the capable new members you have found to join our ranks. However, to be fully effective and make any substantial progress in eliminating discrimination, we need a full-time Officer with specialized experience and training in human rights law and practice. Filling this position also gives Human Rights a full place at the table of upper City management and governance.

This year has had some unusual challenges, particularly an influx of complaints against the City and public input that included personal attacks and other forms of bullying. With a strong Commission membership and the support of you, Carol, and the City Council, we have managed these challenges, but we are worn thin and are frustrated in our larger mission. The most recent changes in the Ordinance are welcome and address longstanding problems, but they have also created even more work for us by requiring us to create a process to handle reported concerns about the City's compliance with the Ordinance. We have leadership in our ranks, yes, but we are nonetheless unpaid volunteers without specialized training or full-time hours in our schedules to contribute. For example, initiatives to address the well-documented problems of *blatant discrimination in housing* and *almost complete lack of diversity in local trade unions* simply have not been undertaken.

We can limp along, even pretty well at times, but we are not the full Human Rights team envisioned by the Ordinance. We have gone too long enough without an Officer, and we have all felt the lack. We can't help but wonder why, after the field was reportedly narrowed to a small number of good candidates, we still have had no interviews or apparent progress in filling this position.

So, we collectively formally ask that you *make filling this position a priority*, that you *let us know what the current time-line* is for this hire, and *that you share any information* you can about why the position has not been filled.

Along with you, we look forward to future of the renamed Human Rights and Equity Office, for which this hire is crucial.

Yours truly,
All members of the Urbana Human Relations Commission

CC: Carol Mitten, Elizabeth Hannon