

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2020



CONTACT

Katharine Ligon, Vice President (she/her/hers)

(713) 204-2990, katharine.ligon@thecaucus.org

Austin Davis Ruiz, Communications Director (he/him/his)

(713) 882-5898, austin.ruiz@thecaucus.org

Houston GLBT Political Caucus Statement on the Mayor's Task Force on Policing Reform

Policing—and the application of policing authority and power—is a significant issue for every major city in this country, including Houston, and the Houston GLBT Political Caucus is pleased with efforts to identify needed changes to our current policing system so that it serves all citizens in the best way possible. As part of these efforts, Mayor Sylvester Turner has empaneled the Mayor's Task Force on Policing Reform, a 51-person task force charged with examining Houston Police Department (HPD) practices and procedures and making recommendations in six specific areas.

To be effective, the Mayor's Task Force on Policing Reform must include members that represent all parts of our community with overweighting for communities that more frequently have negative interactions with HPD.

At present, we have several concerns regarding the Task Force:

- The membership of this Task Force does not include any representation from the transgender community.
- The membership also does not include any members from Black Lives Matter: Houston.
- The membership includes representation from anti-transgender groups. This is particularly concerning because the National Center for Transgender Equality states that more than one fifth of transgender people who have interacted with police have experienced police harassment, and six percent of transgender individuals have experienced bias-motivated assault by police officers.
- Black transgender individuals were nominated to serve on the Task Force but were ultimately not selected. This is especially concerning given that 38% of Black transgender individuals have experienced police harassment and 15% have experienced bias-motivated assault by police officers. The lack of inclusion of Black transgender people and the selection and inclusion of people with anti-trans beliefs signals that the administration does not value listening to and protecting all citizens of Houston.

If this task force is truly going to make changes that are representative of all Houstonians, we need more representation and more transparency. The Houston GLBT Political Caucus is

requesting the following from Mayor Sylvester Turner and the Mayor's Task Force on Policing Reform:

- That anti-transgender task force members be removed, and other members as necessary, to allow for representation from the transgender community and Black Lives Matter: Houston;
- That meeting dates, times, and access be published, and that the public be allowed to attend all meetings; and,
- That community engagement be required on all topics.

Now is the time for a true partnership between the community and city government to address police brutality. That partnership requires representation from all communities and people who are committed to the protection of all people. The Caucus calls for these changes to demonstrate that this Task Force, and the City of Houston, are committed to Black trans lives and the Black Lives Matter movement.

###

The Houston GLBT Political Caucus is the South's oldest, civil rights organization dedicated solely to the advancement of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender equality. Founded in 1975, it is the largest GLBT political organization in the city of Houston and Harris County.