



NAACP Arlington Branch
Michael D. Hemminger, President
877-501-6417
president@arlingtonnaacp.com

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arlington, Virginia – The NAACP Arlington Branch strongly opposes the Arlington County Board’s dismissal of the Human Rights Commissioners and the proposed changes to the Human Rights Ordinance which would scale back the Commission’s oversight of employment discrimination and authority to act on alleged human rights violations.

These changes appear to be in retaliation for the Commission’s letter on February 9, 2024, to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) requesting an investigation into the patterns and practices leading to multiple deaths in the Arlington County Detention Facility (ACDF).

The NAACP Arlington Branch raised similar concerns to DOJ in March 2022 and welcomed the Human Rights Commission’s (HRC) letter after two additional in-custody deaths (within four months) at the ACDF. The NAACP Arlington Branch stands behind the HRC’s attempts to bring attention to the in-custody deaths and any civil rights violations occurring in the ACDF. The County Board, Sheriff, and other elected and appointed leaders must do more to prevent the people placed in custody from suffering injury and death.

The NAACP Arlington Branch is outraged that the County Board, instead of addressing the issue raised by the HRC in their letter to DOJ, is choosing to dismiss the commissioners and scale back the commission’s authority to bring attention to future human and civil rights violations. Protecting human rights and enforcing laws against employment and housing discrimination should be a core focus for Arlington County. Some of the proposed amendments to the Human Rights Ordinance would reduce public oversight and transparency of employment discrimination within county government.

The County’s commitment to proactively enforcing discrimination, whether in housing or employment, has been lackluster at best. The Office of Human Rights has long been neglected, underfunded, understaffed, and undervalued. The proposed changes to the Human Rights Ordinance do not address these weaknesses and they do little to bring the ordinance into alignment with federal and state laws on fair housing enforcement.

The County Board’s last minute and non-transparent process to rush through changes to the ordinance and HRC are not in keeping with what we believe the community needs right now and demonstrate a lack of commitment and professional engagement with the human rights of the community.

The NAACP Arlington Branch calls on the Arlington County Board to reverse its apparent retaliatory actions against the Human Rights Commissioners and postpone the August 27, 2024 Special Call meeting to allow the community and stakeholders sufficient time to review and engage with the proposed changes to the Human Rights Ordinance. The NAACP Arlington

Branch urges the County Board to work with us and key stakeholder groups and individuals to take this opportunity to reform the Human Rights Ordinance, staff, and commission not out of a desire to punish county volunteers but because we share a commitment to ending discrimination and ensuring the safety of those in our community.

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NAACP Arlington Branch advocates, agitates, and litigates for the civil rights due to Black America. Our legacy is built on the foundation of grassroots activism by civil rights pioneers who founded the NAACP in 1909 and this branch in 1940. The work of this nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization is sustained by 21st-century Arlington activists and supporters. From classrooms and courtrooms to Arlington County government, the Virginia General Assembly, and the U.S. Congress, our members work to secure the social and political power that will end race-based discrimination. That work is rooted in racial equity, civic engagement, and supportive policies and institutions for all marginalized people. We are committed to an Arlington without racism where Black people enjoy equitable opportunities in a thriving community.