



June 9, 2024

Mayor Horwath and City Council

Thank you for taking the time to consider our perspective regarding the proposed motion on the floor, regarding events. I am the Administrator for Pride Hamilton and the board member who is championing the safety planning of the event. I have volunteered with a few organizations that have had to create security barriers and boundaries either for licensing or for other safety measures. I write this letter as a cis-white-female, a parent to a bisexual person whose partner is transgender, and as a family and friend to many more within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. As an ally, I am not ignorant to the struggles that are faced by the many communities that are represented within the queer community. I will be using family interchangeably between family that is related by blood and family that is chosen because to me family is family no matter how they came to be family, because they're all auntie's cousins or other members of a family.

I understand that above all else, the PRIDE movement is a protest, and to lose sight of that means we would be denying the struggles of every single person in the 2SLGBTQIA+ That have come before us. I recognize that the actions of the protest have turned more towards a celebration, the struggles of Marsha P Johnson and the Stonewall riots and the movement that they created are absolutely at the forefront of everything that I do as it pertains to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I grew up in the early 80s with the AIDS epidemic being a forefront conversation, and having friends of one of my parents being a same sex couple, learning about the need for representation, inclusion and acceptance was brought into my awareness right from the beginning. I was never ignorant to the hate and bigotry that was prevalent not just in Hamilton but in the world in general. I am also very much aware that we currently live in a police state and that, in itself, poses many issues.

As a parent my primary role is ensuring the safety of my children and that is a role that I take very seriously. That would include promoting events where I feel that they are safety is the forefront of the event planners, and teaching them how to assess the events that they choose to be a part of. This is the reason why I became a part of the board for Pride Hamilton and why I am focusing on the safety plan for our events. I wish for the city to be the safe-haven so that my child does not have to go back into the closet.

The reality for this community is that their very existence is under attack every single day. From extreme fundamental religious movements to the legislation being proposed from both New Brunswick and Alberta regarding gender affirming care. Now more than ever do I feel called to be a part of the safety framework for the family members that I have within the community. To me this can be sitting on a board of an organization that represents my family or being part of a "human wall" protecting the very community that is accepting of my family.



The few rallies that I have attended in the past years have relied on “human walls” to keep the members safe. And while I feel I am in a position where I can take the various slurs and other hateful rhetoric and protect the members of the community, I feel that having the physical barrier adds another layer of protection for the community, rather than simply having private security, members of the police force, and members of the community adjacent and other allies alone. My other concerns around not having a physical barrier around events are also about the liability should anyone be harmed in any way. The physical barriers provide a level of security that reduces the risk of injury, and reduces the chance for neither the city nor the organizations to be liable for reparations and restitution.

While I believe that breaking down fences and other barriers is a movement towards true acceptance and inclusion, I do not believe that we are in a position to have that as a reality at this time. We're still very much dealing with hate groups and their online presence and sharing images from other pride organizations as well as misgendering and otherwise denying the basic human rights and dignity's that the charter of rights and freedoms allow us. Our event may not be as large scale as other events in the city, the impact on the city is still large, with personal connections being made by many in our city. We, as humans, are naturally drawn to be included and part of a community, and Pride At The Pier is one way that we can create community.

Again I thank you for your consideration in the opinions that are presented by the board of Pride Hamilton

Regards,

Bonnie Barlow (She/They)

Pride Hamilton | Board Administrator