

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Governor Kim Reynolds
Office of the Governor
Iowa State Capitol
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Governor Reynolds:

The November 2018 24/7 Wall St. Report unfortunately named Waterloo/Cedar Falls as our country's worst place for Black Americans to live and work. This rating is unacceptable and our efforts have been focused on change.

Both cities established initiatives that enact real change, starting with a number of community meetings to address the problems. (Engage, Empower & Act; BHC NAACP Town Halls, Waterloo Chief Advisory Group; 24/7 Black Leadership Advancement Consortium; Cedar Valley Economic Inclusion Network). We've joined together in a grass-roots community book read of Ibram X. Kendi's How to Be an Anti-Racist. The reality of racism in our community and country is unacceptable. Our efforts and energies are dedicated to removing the Cedar Valley from the 24/7 Wall St. Report.

While progress is being made, that progress is thwarted by efforts underway in the Iowa Legislature with three bills in particular—*HF 222*, *HF 590*, *SF 478*. One of these bills, *HF 590*, has already been rushed through both House and Senate. This bill, that limits early voting opportunities and punishes county auditors for their efforts to encourage voting, is a stumbling block to progress. It is also an unusual response to record voter turnout which is to be encouraged, not limited.

The two other bills both limit efforts to better understand the reality of racism past and present. We are grateful to know that one bill (*HF 222*) has been defeated. This bill would have punished schools from using supplemental curriculums like the 1619 Project which is the very thorough work of Waterloo's own, Pulitzer Prize Winner, Nikole Hannah-Jones. We support the use of this thoroughly researched, honest and historically accurate resource. We do not support legislation that looks and feels like book banning, especially book banning in the name of free speech. The other bill (*SF 478*) seeks to put a stop to diversity training in our schools and colleges. We must point out the irony. The effort to do away with this kind of training is very clear evidence we need more diversity trainings.

These three bills, individually, are steps backwards; taken together and alongside several other bills under consideration such as *HSB 242*, they send a clear message miles away from Iowa nice. These bills stifle our growth and leaves Iowa's advertised "Fields of Opportunities" barren.

The Cedar Valley's vision is growth and continued contribution to our great state's success. Our focus zeroes in on recruiting new and diverse talents and welcoming new neighbors. These bills do not reflect the best of who we are and who we strive to be. We join our voices as community leaders, and ask, for the good of our community and our state, that you veto HF 590 and SF 478. We need your help!

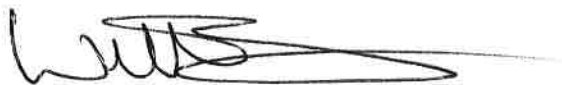
Respectfully Yours,



The Honorable
Cedar Falls Mayor Rob Green



The Honorable
Waterloo Mayor Quentin Hart



Dr. Willie Barney, Chair
Cedar Falls Human Rights Commission



Eric Donat, Chair
Waterloo Commission on Human Rights

The Honorable Timi Brown-Powers

The Honorable Dave Williams

The Honorable Bob Kressig

The Honorable Bill Dotzler

The Honorable Ras Smith

The Honorable Eric Giddens

Rev. Dave Kivett, Cathy Young and Dee Vandeventer, Cedar Valley Antiracism Coalition

LaTanya Graves, President, Black Hawk County NAACP

Dr. Gulsum Kucaksari and Dr. Naomi McCormick, Cedar Valley Interfaith Council

Rev. Abraham L. Funchess, Jr., MLK New Jerusalem

Bishop Jay R. Burt and Shirley Greer, Eastside Ministerial Alliance