

Moore, Tania

From: Fikes, Cathy
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 3:55 PM
To: Agenda Alerts
Subject: FW: Council item #23-165
Attachments: Blue Shield of CA Foundation letter to Huntington Beach City Council.pdf

From: Zakrzewski, Guy <Guy.Zakrzewski@Blueshieldcafoundation.org> **On Behalf Of** Chang, Debbie
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 1:06 PM
To: CITY COUNCIL <city.council@surfcity-hb.org>
Subject: Council item #23-165

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of Blue Shield of California Foundation, I am submitting the attached public comment to the City Council in opposition to Council item #23-165, the proposed ordinance banning the flying of the Pride Flag on city property.

Sincerely,

Debbie I. Chang, M.P.H. | President and CEO | 650.608.0684 (cell phone)

Blue Shield of California Foundation | www.blueshieldcafoundation.org

Sr Executive Assistant | Guy Zakrzewski (they/them/theirs) Guy.Zakrzewski@blueshieldcafoundation.org

**SUPPLEMENTAL
COMMUNICATION**

Meeting Date: 2/21/2023

Agenda Item No.: #23 (23-165)



February 17, 2023

Huntington Beach City Council
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Mayor Strickland and Councilmembers:

Blue Shield of California Foundation's mission is to support lasting and equitable solutions to make California the healthiest state and to end domestic violence. We are an independent private foundation funded entirely by contributions from Blue Shield of California, a nonprofit health plan.

We are submitting public comment to object to the City Council's proposal to ban flying the rainbow Pride Flag on city property. We sincerely hope that our testimony at this time, along with other supporting statements, provides the information the City Council needs to vote against this proposal.

The Foundation had planned to hold a two-day retreat with our Board of Trustees and senior management team at the Waterfront Beach Resort Hilton Hotel in June. When we learned of the City Council's vote on February 7th to change city policy specifically to ban flying the Pride Flag, we decided that we could no longer in good conscience meet in your city until the uncertainty of this situation is resolved. It is antithetical to our mission and values as an organization and a funder. We want to thank the management and owners of the Waterfront Beach Resort Hilton Hotel for deciding to refund our deposit, after understanding the reason for our cancellation.

The Foundation funds organizations across California that seek to prevent domestic violence and inequities in health. We have invested in organizations in Orange County since we were founded in 2002: in the past two decades, the Foundation has contributed almost \$12.5 million in grants to 37 organizations addressing health and domestic violence.

The City Council's action to remove the Pride Flag matters to us because it undermines our mission and puts a vulnerable population at risk of further harm. LGBTQ+ communities are subject to high rates of health inequities and domestic violence.

For example, members of the LGBTQ community experience domestic violence at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts and have



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foundation

historically been denied access to domestic violence services or legal protections. Members of these communities also have higher burdens of depression, cancer, and HIV/AIDS.

Stigmatization, hate-violence, and discrimination are still major barriers to the health and well-being of the LGBTQ community. Banning the Pride Flag contributes to a hostile and dangerous environment for this community.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the City Council continue showing support for its LGBTQ residents by flying the Pride Flag. There is still time to do the right thing. Please do not give final approval to an ordinance that would prevent flying the Pride Flag on city property.

Sincerely,

Debbie I. Chang

Debbie I. Chang, MPH
President & CEO
Blue Shield of California Foundation