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To: City Council members

From: Jackie Smith, in my role as Co-coordinator, Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance

Date: April 20, 2021

Re: Support for Councilperson Gross's Fair Housing Proclamation 2021-1400

Today's proclamation in support of fair housing comes as we mark the tenth anniversary the City's Proclamation that named Pittsburgh the 5th Human Rights City in the United States.

Unfortunately, Pittsburgh has made too little progress in realizing the vision of a human rights city that inspired young leaders to ask the Council to adopt a human rights framework to orient policy and "build infrastructure for racial justice, conflict prevention, human security, sustainable development, and create a place for active civic engagement at the local, national and global level".

As a result of these failures we learned from the recent Gender Equity Commission study that Pittsburgh's African American residents face some of the worst conditions across the country. Tens of thousands of Pittsburgh's Black residents have been displaced from the city over recent decades, a trend that has accelerated with time. The pandemic has exacerbated the suffering of our city's Black residents, prevented us from curbing the spread of COVID-19, and it threatens to displace far more unless serious action is taken to reverse the long-term effects of Pittsburgh's systemic racism.

The Human Rights City Alliance is working to build coalitions to support action in the city to make human rights central to policy and planning. We know that this requires a fundamental shift in mindset to prioritize the needs of residents over the desires of those who see our city as an investment opportunity.

I want to remind Council members that addressing Pittsburgh's serious racial disparities and centering people over profits is not just an ideal of those committed to values of human rights, it is also the obligation of public officials under both national and international law.

This proclamation recognizes the important contributions of the AFFH task force and the City's Commission on Human Relations in helping us fulfil these obligations. It also supports action consistent with the recommendations raised by the City's Gender Equity Commission and with this Council's prior commitments to human rights city leadership. The Council should support its passage and also commit to taking concrete actions to enact its intent.

We cannot forget that our efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 both locally and beyond requires that we protect the most vulnerable in our communities and ensure that everyone can shelter in place and that they have healthy and safe accommodations. The Human Rights City Alliance looks forward to working with members of Council and other City officials to help realize this very basic right—the right to a safe and stable home—for all residents.

Thank you, Councilperson Gross, for supporting this proclamation.