

NORWALK BRANCH NAACP

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June 11, 2018

Dear Mayor Rilling,

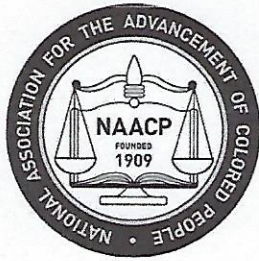
We appreciated meeting with you and members of your administration on Thursday, June 7, 2018, to discuss proposed changes to the Fair Housing Officer position in Norwalk. We write now to memorialize that conversation and to clarify our position.

As you know, the institutions of the Fair Housing Officer and Fair Housing Advisory Commission were created by a consent decree that resulted from litigation between the Norwalk NAACP and the City of Norwalk. The consent decree was first entered in 1986, amended several times, and key provisions were encoded into Norwalk's city ordinances.

As we explained when we met on Thursday, the NAACP remains deeply committed to both the letter and the spirit of the Consent Decree. We share your position, which you reiterated several times, that the Consent Decree is binding authority over the placement, programmatic supervision, and job description of the Fair Housing Officer. We also share your understanding that, under the consent decree, the Fair Housing Advisory Commission has the exclusive authority to exercise programmatic supervision over Norwalk's Fair Housing Officer, and that any supervision exercised by any other official must be – in the words of the Consent Decree – “administrative only.”

The NAACP's goals are what they have always been: Fully funding and staffing the Fair Housing Officer and Fair Housing Advisory Commission, and promoting the Officer's and the Commission's insulation from electoral politics. In our view, Norwalk needs a Fair Housing Officer now more than ever. As we discussed, we are not now amenable to changing the terms of the Consent Decree to weaken the Fair Housing Officer position, and we never have been.

We note that, under the Consent Decree, the placement of the Fair Housing Officer, the Fair Housing Officer's job description, and the ordinances that establish and regulate the Fair Housing Advisory Commission and the Fair Housing Officer cannot be changed without consent of the NAACP. We have not given that consent.



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But we are always open to constructive dialogue with the city to strengthen the institutions created by the Consent Decree and to advance the purpose of the Consent Decree – increasing housing opportunity and ending housing discrimination in Norwalk.

We appreciate that you share our commitment to ongoing dialogue and constructive negotiation going forward. We accept your promise that there will be no substantive attempts to change the Fair Housing Officer's role in Norwalk – including, in our understanding, the physical and organizational placement, supervision, job description, full-time nature, or budgeting of the position – without further dialogue and communication between the city, the NAACP, and the Fair Housing Advisory Commission.

We look forward to further conversation with you. Together, we can ensure that Norwalk's bright future includes all people – including the most vulnerable residents, and especially including those who are subject to past and ongoing discrimination.

Sincerely,


Brenda Penn-Williams, President