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Advocates for Social Justice Release Citizen Review Board Recommendations

The first of seven demands announced on June 6 by the Advocates for Social Justice (ASJ) called for the creation of a Citizen Review Board (CRB). Following the city's decision to end meetings with ASJ, the group's internal CRB research team began meeting with leading experts with experience in developing and overseeing CRBs. Among the list are Nitasha Sawhney, General Counsel to the City of Oakland Police Commission, Cameron McElhiney, Director of Training and Education for the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, and Hilary Shelton, Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy for the NAACP. Additionally, the team has spent the past four weeks reviewing effective CRB practices published by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, and the NAACP, as well as national CRB models from Portland, Denver, and Camden, New Jersey. With this wealth of research and salient input from individuals with years of experience, ASJ has now released their recommendations for the ideal structure of the CRB that is best suited for the city of Cedar Rapids. These recommendations have been endorsed by Emily Galvin-Almanza, Founder and Co-Executive Director of Partners for Justice; Phillip Agnew, criminal justice reform activist; Evelyn Carter, Ph.D, a social psychologist and racial bias expert; and a number of other leading experts and organizations in the criminal justice reform arena.

"Our team has been working non-stop to get these recommendations ready for the people of Cedar Rapids. Given the level of research we have done and feedback we have received from national experts, we believe our recommendations are robust enough to start addressing some of the systemic issues within our police department," said Amara Andrews, attorney and community leader.

As defined by ASJ, a Citizens Review Board is, "A formal mechanism with membership comprised of majority non-law enforcement community members to act as an outside, independent authority to investigate alleged officer misconduct and review all instances where excessive and lethal force was used by an officer or whenever an officer's firearm was discharged." One of the main objectives of the ASJ recommended CRB is to ensure that people of color -- who currently are grossly overrepresented in stops, arrests, and incarceration -- have an independent body to go to with complaints, whom they can trust to provide a fair and insightful review of the actions and the complaints. This CRB would be empowered to reprimand officers and exercise other authorities relating to public safety. The lead authors for the CRB recommendations include: Anne Carter Harris, Circe Stumbo, Tamara Marcus, and Linn County Supervisor, Stacey Walker.

"While the design specifications for the CRB are consequential, even more important are the signals sent by City and community leaders about their willingness to name and address the difficult root causes of racial disproportionately and the wide range of feelings of vulnerability, loss, and anger across the community," said Anne Carter Harris.

The call for a CRB is part of a broader agenda to achieve racial justice in Cedar Rapids. The success of a CRB is highly dependent upon the extent to which The City is able to center race in deliberations about its design. How the city engages with ASJ on the development of the CRB will likely set the stage for how the other six demands are implemented. ASJ has created subcommittees to address the remaining demands and plans to release more information

regarding this work in the coming weeks. Representatives from ASJ are set to meet with members from the Cedar Rapids Community Development and Planning Department on Tuesday morning.

See attached document for ASJ CRB recommendations.

Other notable endorsers include:

Nitasha Sawhney, Counsel to Oakland City Police Commission
Misty Rebik, Activist and Community Leader
Emily Sinnwell and David Goodner, Iowa City Catholic Worker House
Rebecca Solow, Founder and Co-Executive Director, Partners for Justice
Amara Andrews, Board President, The Academy for Scholastic & Personal Success
Katie Biechler, SEIU Local 199
Rev. Jonathan Heifner, Cedar Rapids Faith Leader
Steve Shriver, Activist and Community Leader
Mary Wilczynski, Ph.D, Educator (retired) and SET Policy Board Member
Ralph Plagman, Ph.D, Educator (retired)
Taylor Bergen, Activist and Community Leader
Raphael Scheetz, Attorney
Joshua Milam, Cedar Rapids Faith Leader
Daria Fisher Page, Clinical Associate Professor, University of Iowa College of Law
Pramod Dwivedi, Director, Linn County Public Health
Joshua McLeod, MA Criminological Research, Cambridge University
David & Jillian Knutson, Dermatology Clinic of Iowa
Pam Larson, Pam Larson Coaching
ALison K. Guernsey, University of Iowa College of Law
Jessica Welburn Paige, Assistant Professor of Sociology and African American Studies, University of Iowa

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