

September 16, 2020

[MAYOR'S NAME]

Office of The Mayor

[MAYOR'S OFFICE ADDRESS]

Dear Mayor [REDACTED],

We are former board leadership, workers, volunteers, and invested community partners of [REDACTED] [FULL NAME OF ORGANIZATION]. We represent a broad swath of individuals who have—over many years—nurtured, innovated, advocated for, rooted for, sweated over and really believed in the transformative power of elevating all voices through [ORG] and its services.

Unfortunately, in recent years many of us have, individually and in small groups, witnessed various disturbing actions that ran counter to the empowerment of our community. Seeing the unfolding damage to people, programs and services, we spoke up and tried to help. We believed (naively) that this period of dysfunction would come to an end and right would prevail.

We trusted that surely through the efforts of good people, problems would be recognized and corrected. But one by one many of us became exhausted and discouraged. Some were forced away. Others simply shook their heads and began the mourning process for what was and might have been.

But today we come together renewed, not as individuals, but to collectively bring visibility to the destructive pattern of egregious conduct. We are no longer able to watch the continued deceitful leadership and abuse of power that is resulting in

- Staff being dismissed, threatened and defamed
- Funds mishandled and misdirected
- Partner relationships destroyed
- Volunteers mistreated
- And most importantly, voices silenced.

The [REDACTED] [ORG] has long been in financial and programmatic partnership with the City, and we now turn to you to help restore its accountability and possibility.

Attached to this letter you will find a chronology outlining a collection of offending actions that intersect with a wide variety of [REDACTED] [ORG] relationships and services. When taken one by one, the incidents are indeed upsetting, even devastating, to those most directly affected. But taken together, they portray nothing less than a tragic pattern of intentional actions designed to ensure that misdeeds go unchallenged. Board members were pushed out. Program leadership staff who

had built innovative programs and strong community relationships were stripped of their authority to lead. The internal staff leadership team was abolished. Commitments and promises to neighborhoods, members and grantors were disregarded and misrepresented. And in the most grievous and vindictive cases, those who tried to speak up have been slandered and defamed to the point that their very livelihoods continue to be undermined—long after they departed.

This concentration of power and removal of transparency had its intended effect. Rather than being an organization built on servant leadership and protection of each voice, [ORG] has become something antithetical to its original purpose. Power is no longer shared. Dissent is actively stifled, and attempts at corrective action subverted.

Once a shining model for [ORG MISSION] across the country (and even the world), we now watch as [DEPARTMENTS WITHIN ORG] continue to weaken and become irrelevant under the control of current Executive Director [E.D. NAME]. The [ORG] has lost its power and squanders its opportunities to strengthen and amplify community voices.

We, the undersigned, are coming together in one last attempt to save the organization we have believed in, worked for, and continue to love. Unfortunately, few formal mechanisms exist to “send up a flare” when beloved public trust organizations are threatened from within. Individual and smaller group attempts to impact the current trajectory have failed. The mishandling of funds and the mistreatment of staff, (including intense gaslighting, hiding information and creating lies about past employees) continues to go unchecked. But we are not yet ready to walk away without raising our voices, publicly if necessary, in a collective call to make things right.

We are here asking for your help.

We fervently believe that in order to restore the promise of [ORG] and return the transparency and innovation rightfully demanded by the community, these actions (at a minimum) are necessary.

- The Executive Director must cede her role and there must be a new, transparent search for new leadership.
- The Board must, with the assistance and supervision of an outside facilitator, launch a full investigation into leadership malfeasance, and mistreatment of former employees and volunteers.
- The Board must work with foundation and City leadership to create a structure that prevents such abuses of power to run unchecked in the future (and present) within nonprofit organizations they support.
- A revised board structure must be designed for inclusiveness and must minimally include at least one seat for staff designated representation.

We ask you to please take full ownership in the ability you have to return the power of the [REDACTED] [FULL NAME OF ORG] to its citizens. Please take seriously the mistreatment of talented staff and misuse of funds that is destroying the strong legacy that [FOUNDER] established and subsequent leaders built upon.

In a time when individual voices get drowned out by the powers in place and the cacophony of online noise, a strong [ORG TYPE]—once again able to lift those voices up and ensure they're heard—is more important than ever.

Chronology of events:

[LINK TO DOCUMENTATION]

In Solidarity with our Community Voices,

[18 CO-SIGNERS]

**** Former [ORG] worker or volunteer**

*** Former [ORG] Board president / vice-president**

cc:

[RECIPIENT] Foundation

[RECIPIENT] Foundation

[RECIPIENT]