



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** March 6, 2023

**TO:** City Council Members

**FROM:** Andy Merrill, City Councilmember

**SUBJECT:** Consider authorization of a Resolution recognizing the month of June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month

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### RECOMMENDATION

Hear testimony from members of our local LGBTQ+ community, mental health experts, legal experts, and the public on issues currently facing the LGBTQ+ community, what Pride Month means to them, and consider drafting a City resolution recognizing the month of June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month in the City of Sonora, thus standing in solidarity with the County Board of Supervisors.

### DISCUSSION

Last year, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 to recognize the month of June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month in Tuolumne County. This was a monumental resolution that recognized the rights to self-expression and self-determination of an historically discriminated and underrepresented demographic of our community.

It has never been easy to identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. The recent study done by the Tuolumne County Review Council, *Discrimination in Tuolumne County: Amplifying the voices of the marginalized 2021-2022*, sums up the effects of discrimination:

“When intolerance prevents individuals from exercising their talents, there tends to be widespread, long lasting effects. Discrimination affects people’s opportunities, their well-being, and their sense of agency. Persistent exposure to discrimination can lead individuals, especially youth, to internalize the prejudice or stigma that is directed toward them, manifesting in shame, low self-esteem, fear and stress, self-isolation, and poor health. The economic effect results in an astonishing loss of revenue (Cost of Racism: U.S. Economy Lost \$16 Trillion Because of Discrimination, Citibank says.” Adedayo Akala, NPR, September 23, 2020.). In contrast, social inclusion harnesses our diversity as a fuel for small business formation, creativity, public interest, tourism, and innovation.”

For the most part, current national ideologies have trended toward recognizing the rights of all Americans to love and be loved by who they choose, and express themselves without fear of discrimination and/or punishment. “Live and let live” has long been a cornerstone of an ideal American Democracy. However, recent regressive and constitutionally unsound legislation has been introduced in numerous states, effectively censoring the citizen’s right to freedom of expression and public gatherings. More locally, Supervisor Anaiah Kirk overstepped his authority as a Government Official and tyrannically requested peaceful, legal, and county authorized events to be shut down due to their associations with LGBTQ+ community members and organizations. He has cited his Christian religious beliefs as the reason behind his oppressive demands, which by any reasoning is completely inappropriate behavior by a representative of the public.

This issue is brought before the council primarily due to the language included in the recently passed Social Equity Resolution:

“WHEREAS, the City of Sonora is committed to seeking a thoughtful and inclusive way to heal the wounds and inequities, reconcile the divide, and take steps to make sure that acts of violence, aggression, and exclusion will not happen against any marginalized groups, including but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), those living in poverty, and those unhoused, those with mental or physical disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community...

WHEREAS, the City of Sonora proclaims that it is committed to diversity, equity, and an atmosphere of inclusiveness and it respects the dignity of every person without regard to race, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, immigration status, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or political affiliation. The City denounces all hate and discrimination in any form...”

The views expressed by Supervisor Anaiah Kirk, and other misguided individuals in our community do not represent the values enshrined in our Social Equity Resolution, nor do they reflect the ideologies of our community at large. They were intended to stoke fear, raise alarm over straw-man ideologies, and sow division amongst our community. It is the responsibility of this council, acting as elected representatives of all our community members, to recognize the voices wishing to speak freely and openly, and ensure an inclusive and safe environment for all.

This agenda item is intended to be educational, informative, and inspire thought and positive solutions to hate speech and ideology. I’m excited to welcome our honored guest speakers and members of our community to speak before this Council today.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

No fiscal impact to the General Fund.