

July 29, 2020

**Public Comment to the Allentown City Council in Support of Resolution 86**

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center produces arts, health, youth, and pride programs and is headquartered in the heart of downtown Allentown. Through these programs, we pursue a more inclusive, more equitable, and more vibrant city. To that end, we write to offer support of Resolution 86.

Nationally, June is Pride month, in recognition and remembrance of the riots at Stonewall Inn in New York City in June 1969. These riots were a direct response to police raids and police brutality. So it was at the same time when many in the LGBT community were attending virtual pride celebrations that a police officer in Minneapolis murdered George Floyd utilizing a barbaric neck restraint. While Pride today is often seen as a celebration of how far the movement for LGBT liberation has come in 50 years, this year June was a clear reminder of the roots of our protest against police violence.

Only a few weeks after the murder of George Floyd, an Allentown, PA police officer used a knee-on-the-neck restraint, in clear violation of the APD's own Use-of-Force Policy, against a person who was already handcuffed outside of a hospital. Two other officers assisted. Two nurses from the hospital helped. An internal investigation from the police department and from the district attorney both cleared the officer. Nobody was held accountable for this clear act of police violence.

In solidarity with Black people in our City, LGBT people of all colors condemn this violence and ask the Allentown City Council to pass Resolution 86. The commonsense changes included in this resolution are necessary to support Black lives in Allentown. Specifically, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center supports mandated body cam usage by police officers, with strict penalties for officers who turn their body cameras off. We also strongly support automatic external review by the Attorney General's office of any investigation of use of force violations. Ultimately, we ask the City Council to begin the process now to divest resources from the Allentown Police Department and reinvest those resources into community-based violence prevention programs. We encourage a 40% budget reduction to the Allentown Police Department for the next budget year.

Fifty years ago, police violence was an LGBT issue because the police continuously raided gay bars and beat up patrons. This well-documented history is a reminder that marginalized populations are not the populations protected by the police. LGBT people affirm that Black Lives Matter and that system-wide transformational changes to policing are necessary. We encourage swift passage of Resolution 86.

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Executive Director