

February 24, 2021

Dear Mr. Mayor and fellow assembly members,

I am writing to you today out of concern for members of our community being criticized for their testimonies by various assembly members.

It takes courage to speak in front of the assembly; most community members call in with a pre-written letter, which they rehearse, on the topics they are very passionate about. Unfortunately, the fear of speaking, fear of what others may think of their testimony, adrenaline and or lack of confidence, usually makes some sound unprepared, not convincing and scattered. Believe me, speaking over the phone can be as intimidating as having to speak face to face in the assembly chambers. However, at the end of their speaking time they feel as though they have been heard and their feelings about a particular subject have been validated.

The part that is so concerning to me is how our elected officials are responding to some of these testimonies. Each of you know that not every caller voted specifically for you, nor share your opinions about various topics. But, at the end of the day, you are the elected official who is there to represent ALL of the members of the community. No matter who the person is calling in and what their opinion is on any given topic.

In the last two meetings, held on February 22nd and 23rd at the end of the meeting there were disrespectful, condescending comments made towards testimonies and I find this disgusting. I am not asking for you to agree with every caller, it is your right not to. But to blatantly call out and judge a specific testimony is wrong. I have heard bickering amongst assembly members during a meeting and have most recently seen an email being passed around social media where it appears one to be mocking a written testimony submitted to the assembly. When you're an elected official, you are held at a high standard by the public. Maybe these instances I have heard were misrepresentation of words spoken or emotions rising because you yourself are passionate about a particular subject.

I am asking you all to strive to make these meeting more professional and to leave your personal opinions about other people's testimonies out of the public meeting. This is just causing more division in the community and it needs to stop. Everyone in Petersburg is struggling right now, no matter what side of the fence you're on or what you think is best. We are ALL tired, over whelmed and want, what we believe to be, our old normal life back. Let's not add any additional fuel to the fire. Petersburg is better than this.

Sincerely,



Angela Davis