

Eddie Edwards

June 30, 2020

Honorable Councilor Debora Pignatelli
State of New Hampshire
Concord, NH 03301

Greetings Councilor Pignatelli,

I read your letter that appeared in InDepth on June 27, 2020. With respect Councilor Pignatelli, I am not sure why you continue to devalue and marginalize my experience and expertise. You wrote I was not a “good fit” for the position and that Governor Sununu should have known he could not get a majority of councilors to confirm my nomination. I am not sure if you have taken the time to review my full resume submitted to the Executive Council in March. How were you able to arrive at the decision that I was not a “good fit” without interviewing me? Why would the Governor or any fair minded person believe for a moment that a majority of the Executive Council would not confirm a nominee with my level of leadership experience, expertise and knowledge in the nominated area? I, for one, never imagined that a majority of the Executive Council would not vote to confirm me particularly knowing the recent history of this very same council voting to confirm an inexperienced white nominee with no expertise or knowledge in the area.

What I find even more concerning is your statement that underestimates the Governor’s selected nominees. You wrote, *“The most recent examples of his appointments to the Board of Education and the Office of State Licensure Certification – both with very important responsibilities. In those two cases, the nominees were African American men.”* You go on to express that I would have been a better fit in various positions in state government that would have taken advantage of my business background, just not the position at hand. There is no way that you read my resume and came to that conclusion. Although I am a small business owner, most of my career has been in law enforcement and regulatory compliance. Perhaps stating that in your letter makes you feel as though you are providing an explanation for your actions. Unfortunately, it is just factually inaccurate. Also, the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification is in fact a regulatory compliance agency. Your statements, therefore, are either being said to intentionally mislead readers or you are truly unaware of your bias. Your comments also revealed purposeful actions that now make clear why I was not afforded a hearing.

It feels awful now knowing the true reason I was structurally denied a hearing was because you decided I was not a “good fit for the position at hand before even speaking with me.” In your self-assigned task as an omniscient Councilor, I find your plan for my career to be shockingly insulting. Are you not aware that I was responsible here in New Hampshire for a very complex body of regulations, administrative rules and laws? I was equally accountable for a broad variety

of legal guidelines; NH Constitution, NH Revised Statutes Annotated, NH Administrative Procedures Act, NH Rules Evidence, NH Criminal Procedure, US Federal Constitutional Protections, US Code of Federal Regulation, Division Standard Operating Procedures, Collective Bargaining Agreement and Department of Personnel Rules that define agency limits and the public's protection? I have handled budget preparations with several Governors and legislators as well as state audits. I was responsible for enforcement, licensing and education for over five thousand alcohol and tobacco regulated licensees that were categorized by over 40 different business types. These businesses employed a total of more than 200,000 employees. I wrote and directed the supervision for the corporate security plan of our 700 million dollar state liquor business. I am not sure if you realize how demeaning it is to hear an elected official dismiss your accomplishments and life's professional work experience without pausing for the truth.

Equally troubling, you voted to confirm the Director of the State Police without a hearing on April 8th. I can only conclude you believed the merits and responsibilities associated with the State's largest law enforcement agency are not as important or equal to those of the Executive Director of OPLC. I strongly disagree.

During the Council meeting on March 25th, Councilor Volinsky explained that there was no hurry to confirm my nomination." On April 6, Councilor Volinsky stated I should have an online hearing to give the public an opportunity to be heard. Apparently, neither you nor Councilor Volinsky felt compelled to apply the same public interest standard to the State's largest police agency position.

Councilor Pignatelli, in your letter you point out "these were African American men" and you have stated recently you recommended "two highly qualified black women" for a position. Moreover, you continue to use a racially charged false narrative to reject black men while defending your position by offering black women instead. I am not sure if you realize how humiliating this is to both women and men. Why are you making such an effort to draw a line of value between black men and black women? Are you suggesting that black men in leadership positions are over-represented in New Hampshire state government? I certainly know black women are not. I have to share with you it leaves me with the impression your distinction here is an attempt to divide. As an elected official during this moment when our communities are searching for unity, why would you try to draw such a line between people of color? Please understand the era of creating conflict between people of color for political gain has long passed.

Based upon your comments and actions, I can only conclude that you are uncomfortable with black conservative men in leadership positions. You appear to be more than happy to recommend black conservative men to positions where their input has isolated influence and they are not seen as leaders. You have not hesitated to confirm a white nominee with "no experience" and another with "very important responsibilities" without a hearing. Please understand, my question is not a concern about these nominees' fitness or talents for their confirmed positions, I know the Director of SP and believe him to be an outstanding leader. My concern is about your

continued unwillingness to acknowledge what every fair-minded person has acknowledged. You applied a different standard to me, plain and simple.

As a black man in this great state, it feels as if the only time you and so many others are comfortable with identifying structural political racism or talking about addressing racism is when it's a conservative white male or a white police officer charged or alleged to have wronged a black person by denying their God given rights or constitutional liberties. If you are truly interested in addressing inequalities, I would hope you would begin by acknowledging the error you made by prejudging me based upon my political party affiliation and/or race. I sincerely want you to know just how unfair and wrong you have been to me.

I believe that the comments in your letter reveal even more how totally unaware you are of your perpetration of injustice toward black men. Pointing the finger at others and continuing to devalue and demean qualified black nominees does not justify your actions. Your actions regarding the specific position of OPLC clearly show you believed a white nominee without experience and expertise was a "better fit", than the leadership of a black conservative with experience and expertise in the nominated area.

Finally, please help me understand how Covid-19 prevented the Council from scheduling a remote confirmation hearing that you, Councilor Volinsky and Councilor Cryans committed to on April 8th.

Sincerely,
Eddie Edwards