

Pride Northwest, Inc.

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Hello from Pride Northwest. We are the 501c3 nonprofit organization responsible for the annual Portland Pride Waterfront Festival and Parade. We are writing to our LGBTQ and allied law enforcement members, regarding what we absolutely recognize is a sensitive and complex issue for the full diversity of LGBTQ people.

These are interesting times, to say the least. There are issues that have long simmered below the surface that have come out into the open, which must be addressed. There is and has long been-significant divisions within our community. Our goal is to create a space that will allow for further dialogue and connection between all members of our community, to build a stronger and more unified people.

Those of us over the age of thirty recognize the courage and perseverance that it has taken, to reach a point where you are able to be out and serving in the capacities that you do. We absolutely honor that. At the same time, we are also very aware of the history between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community. And that is a history that remains unresolved, particularly for our LGBTQ people of color and Trans-identified. So, we have two things true at once. LGBTQ people have made tremendous strides, in being able to serve in law enforcement as out individuals AND we have a great many in our community still traumatized and targeted by law enforcement, as a whole.

Given both of these things, we at Pride Northwest, as the entity entrusted to represent and honor ALL of our community, find ourselves caught in the middle. We have been approached by many in our community, who don't feel safe at their own Pride, with a great many planning not to participate at all. Our hope is to use this unique position, to foster a way forward. Without going on about what a way forward might look like, because we know it isn't about a single act or conversation-we are in this for the long haul, in helping in some way, to find connection and healing in our community.

While a single act is not the end of the story, we believe that they can carry significant impact and a strong message. Whether it should be this way or not, the reality is that many of our people do not see a person behind the badge-they only see a uniform, and that is where the connection ends. To that end, we are asking LGBTQ and allied people in law enforcement, who plan to march in the Portland Pride Parade NOT to march in uniform. Maybe wear department polos or other shirt-something besides the uniform. To be clear, we are NOT asking you not to march. We even recognize that you are likely authorized for conceal/carry-we would expect you to follow whatever protocols you typically have there. We are simply hoping to bring down some of those barriers in our community. **Please NOTE: NO**

member of law enforcement will be denied or turned away from the parade. Our only ask, based on all of the above, is to consider the potential of not doing so.

Thank you for listening and for giving serious consideration to this request. We know that it is not an easy subject, and likely somewhat painful. It is our hope that you will join us in looking at a larger picture and the potential for what we can accomplish, in bringing down a barrier that quite often prevents the conversation from ever even getting started. We love you and honor your LGBTQ identity-and all that this entails.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Debra Porta
Executive Director, on behalf of the Board of Directors
Pride Northwest, Inc.