

September 7, 2023

To: Members of City Council, City of Jacksonville

From: Parvez Ahmed, Chief of Diversity and Inclusion, Office of the Mayor, City of Jacksonville

CC: Donna Deegan, Mayor, City of Jacksonville

On August 24, 2023, the Finance Committee voted to cut Mayor Deegan's staff salary budget by an amount that added up to the salary and benefits for the Chief of Diversity and Inclusion (CDI). I am appealing to you to reverse this cut because it gives the appearance of jeopardizing our city's economic competitiveness and undermines our capacity to effectively serve all our citizens. In this memo, I will briefly address some of the concerns raised by the Finance Committee.

I hope you will reconsider and restore funding for the following reasons. *First*, Mayor Deegan's staff budget is only nominally higher than the average inflation-adjusted staff budget for the previous administration. *Second*, a diversity officer is commonplace in corporate America and local governments because the position brings value to the organizations by, among other things, reducing complaints of harassment and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> *Third*, there is little overlap between the roles and responsibilities of the CDI and the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission (JHRC). *Finally*, targeting CDI for defunding, is the wrong message at the wrong time while our city reels from a racist mass shooting underscoring the need to reduce polarization.

See below relevant data, which I hope you will take into consideration in your deliberations:

**1. Mayor Deegan's staff budget is comparable to the previous administration.**

- a. Comparing past mayoral salary budgets to the current should take into account inflation.
- b. Doing so will show that Mayor Deegan's staff salary budget is only about 3 percent higher than the average of the past 8 fiscal years. Table provided at the end of this memo.

**2. Diversity officers are a common practice because the benefits are clear.**

- a. While the COJ is new to the best practice of having a diversity officer, the practice is neither new to government nor corporate America.
  - i. About a decade ago, only 20 percent of S&P 500 companies had a diversity officer. That number is now over 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 85 out of the top 100 companies have a diversity officer.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> How Promoting Diversity Helps Prevent Discrimination, EVERFI, <https://everfi.com/blog/workplace-training/promoting-diversity-helps-prevent-discrimination/>

<sup>2</sup> Shi, Wei & Pathak, Seemantini & Song, Jiwen & Hoskisson, Robert. (2017). The Adoption of Chief Diversity Officers among S&P 500 Firms: Institutional, Resource Dependence, and Upper Echelons Accounts. *Human Resource Management*. 57. 10.1002/hrm.21837.

<sup>3</sup> Companies scramble to hire diversity officers, but progress is slow, *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-03-12/companies-are-scrambling-to-hire-diversity-officers>

- ii. Corporations are leaning into diversity because those with greater employee diversity have lower turnover and greater job satisfaction. Moreover, companies in the top quartile of employee diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their industry medians.<sup>4</sup>
- b. Diversity officers in city government, while somewhat new, are now increasingly common as cities such as Jacksonville grapple with increased diversity in their populations.<sup>5</sup>
  - i. Several Florida cities such as Tampa, St. Petersburg, Orlando, and Gainesville, have diversity officers, as do other peer cities such as Charlotte and Atlanta.<sup>6</sup>
  - ii. City agencies in Jacksonville, such as JEA and JTA, both have diversity officers.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Chief of Diversity and Inclusion fills a critical void with a role that is different from JHRC.**

- a. JHRC focuses on investigation and mediation when allegations of discrimination arise in employment or housing. JHRC's community outreach activities are thus primarily around educating the public about their fair housing and employment related rights.
- b. CDI in contrast takes a more proactive approach by developing and implementing policies and programs that will reduce discrimination and acrimony by promoting a culture of collaboration across our differences. Activities include but are not limited to:
  - i. CDI will outreach to diverse communities, in order to ensure that those in underserved and underrepresented communities are being heard from and equitably served by COJ.
  - ii. CDI will collaborate with the Director of Boards and Commission to improve diverse representation of citizens on COJ's boards and commissions.<sup>8</sup>
  - iii. CDI will propose and track policy, within the limits of relevant state and federal laws, to improve the impact of COJ's employment, grants, and contracting, across race, gender, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, and religion.
  - iv. CDI will propose and track workplace climate surveys that improve the preparedness of COJ employees to effectively serve the increasingly diverse citizens of Jacksonville.
  - v. CDI will work in collaboration with other Directors on mayor's staff to evaluate and institute programs in partnership with nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations to harness our city's diversity as a tool for our success.

---

<sup>4</sup> Why Diversity Matters by Dame Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince, *McKinsey*, 2015.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

<sup>5</sup> Editorial: New Census data shows that Jacksonville is becoming more racially diverse, *Florida Times Union*, August 29, 2021. <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/opinion/2021/08/29/editorial-census-data-shows-jacksonville-more-racially-diverse/8222022002/>

<sup>6</sup> The average salary of the diversity officer in these aforementioned cities is about \$183,570.

<sup>7</sup> JEA Names its First Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, *JEI Press Release*. June 1, 2022.

[https://www.jea.com/about/media\\_relations/2022\\_01\\_06\\_jea\\_names\\_its\\_first\\_director\\_of\\_diversity\\_equity\\_inclusion](https://www.jea.com/about/media_relations/2022_01_06_jea_names_its_first_director_of_diversity_equity_inclusion)

<sup>8</sup> While the Director of Boards and Commissions is tasked with evaluating the qualifications of candidates and shepherding them through the confirmation process, the CDI is tasked with outreaching to diverse communities so that representation on Boards and Commissions is reflective of Jacksonville's demographics.

Corporations recognize the need for diversity officers because overwhelming numbers of employees cite company culture for their reasons to join and stay.<sup>9</sup> Similar reasons impact relocation of employees and employers to cities.<sup>10</sup> For Jacksonville to reach its potential, we must learn from best practices in other peer cities so that we can remain competitive in attracting and retaining a talented workforce. Jacksonville's corporate leaders recognize that harnessing diversity adds value to their companies and our city.<sup>11</sup> The City Council and the Mayor share a commitment to making Jacksonville a destination city. For Jacksonville to achieve this vision, it will need a diversity officer who can advise and guide the new mayoral administration to leverage our city's diversity to power a more prosperous future for all.

**TABLE FOR CALCULATING INFLATION ADJUSTED SALARIES**

Mayor	Fiscal Year	Year Approved*	Salaries	Adjusted for Inflation**	Above or Below Average
Curry	2016	2015	\$ 2,271,221	\$ 2,919,179	-12.32%
Curry	2017	2016	\$ 2,617,596	\$ 3,310,217	-0.58%
Curry	2018	2017	\$ 2,751,046	\$ 3,409,388	2.40%
Curry	2019	2018	\$ 2,819,979	\$ 3,408,830	2.39%
Curry	2020	2019	\$ 3,041,676	\$ 3,613,085	8.43%
Curry	2021	2020	\$ 3,054,081	\$ 3,585,438	7.61%
Curry	2022	2021	\$ 3,188,113	\$ 3,523,558	5.75%
Curry	2023	2022	\$ 2,814,042	\$ 2,886,552	-13.30%
Curry	<b>Average</b>		<b>\$ 2,817,462</b>	<b>\$ 3,329,397</b>	
Deegan	2024	2023	\$ 3,431,491	\$ 3,431,491	2.98%

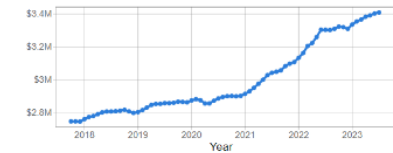
\* Salaries were assumed to be approved as of October of year noted.  
 \*\* Inflation adjusted using: <https://www.calculator.net/inflation-calculator.html>. Inflation adjustment calculated from October of Year Approved to July of 2023. For example, fiscal year 2016 salaries are budgeted effective October 2015.

### Sample Inflation Calculation from Calculator.net

**\$3,409,388.53** in Jul. 2023 equals **\$2,751,046** of buying power in Oct. 2017.

The total inflation rate from Oct. 2017 to Jul. 2023 is **23.93%**. The average inflation rate is **3.80%** per year.  
 The CPI of Oct. 2017 is 248.863 and the CPI of Jul. 2023 is 305.691.

Purchasing power of \$2,751,046 in Oct. 2017 over time: Oct. 2017-Jul. 2023



\$2,751,046 in October 2017 = ? in July 2023

Calculate Clear

**\$3,523,558.24** in Jul. 2023 equals **\$3,188,113** of buying power in Oct. 2021.

The total inflation rate from Oct. 2021 to Jul. 2023 is **10.52%**. The average inflation rate is **5.88%** per year.  
 The CPI of Oct. 2021 is 276.589 and the CPI of Jul. 2023 is 305.691.

Purchasing power of \$3,188,113 in Oct. 2021 over time: Oct. 2021-Jul. 2023



\$3,188,113 in October 2021 = ? in July 2023

Calculate Clear

<sup>9</sup> Which Employees Value DE&I Most? *Society for Human Resources Management*, November 4, 2022.

<https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/more-proof-that-dei-programs-matter.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Florida, Richard, "The Rise of the Creative Class," *Basic Books*, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Recognizing the Strength of Diversity, UNF Foundation, <https://www.unf.edu/foundation/your-impact/stories/recognizing-the-strength-of-diversity.html>