

Eddie Edwards

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June 23, 2020

Honorable Governor Chris Sununu  
State of New Hampshire  
Concord, NH 03301

Greetings Governor Sununu,

Thank you for nominating me to lead the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification in the position of Executive Director. I have had many, "I am the first in my family" moments during my life. Being nominated by a Governor to serve is another one of those moments. Regrettably, this is a moment that will go unfulfilled. I have served my country and state with honor while constantly being evaluated as a fair and dedicated public servant.

Please accept this letter as my request to withdraw my nomination for Executive Director of OPLC. Unfortunately, Councilor Andru Volinsky appears to have gained control over a majority of councilors, specifically Debora Pignatelli and Michael Cryans. Their combined actions to delay a confirmation hearing since March 11<sup>th</sup> have become unreasonable and unacceptable. The agency has had two Executive Directors and one Interim Executive Director in just less than four years. As of tomorrow's Governor and Council meeting, 105 days will have passed since I was nominated. More importantly, the continued utilization of unreasonable tactics by the Executive Council are damaging to good governance for the people of New Hampshire, the agency and the boards and commissions who expect and deserve certainty.

The three Councilors have structurally denied me a public hearing through tactics masquerading as delays. The agency cannot continue to be left in limbo and I can no longer afford to place my life on hold. During this unreasonable denial period, I have rejected the pursuit of other opportunities to serve at the national level as well as in the private sector. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, Councilor Volinsky stated that I should have a public hearing online. This comes on the heels of you asking for the Council to take a vote on my nomination. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that the Executive Council would conduct a remote confirmation hearing. As of today, I have not heard a single word from the Executive Council regarding a potential remote hearing date or an in-person hearing.

Moments before you announced my nomination, Councilor Volinsky made a video recording from the Executive Council Chamber alleging that I had no experience or expertise. He continued by stating that he was going to ask for a hearing and oppose the nomination. Councilor Volinsky's statement about my qualifications was not only false but it also played into a racial stereotype long since removed from our society. In light of Councilor Volinsky's self proclaimed

relationship with the NAACP and Black Lives Matter, it would be shocking if he were unaware of the historical context associated with false claims that black people are not qualified as a tactic to exclude them or deny career opportunities. As you know, I have over 25 years of licensure and certification experience. I hold a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from Northcentral University. I am a graduate of the FBI National Academy and the Harvard University Kennedy Business School of Management of Regulatory and Enforcement Agencies. I have also served as a consultant and an expert witness regarding regulatory and law enforcement compliance, policies and procedures.

I have served in a number of leadership positions throughout my career as a Navy veteran, correctional officer, local Chief of Police and Director of the Division of Liquor Enforcement. As Director, I lead the Division in becoming New Hampshire's first statewide law enforcement agency to receive the distinction of Advanced National Law Enforcement Accreditation as well as being honored with national awards and recognitions. I also served as the Division's chief administrative prosecutor and as the primary regulatory drafter. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to provide regulatory enforcement and licensing strategy assistance to multiple communities throughout the United States. I have served on a number of boards, committees and legislative commissions throughout my career which included; NH US Attorney General's Identity Theft Task Force, Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, NH DWI and Street Gang Commissions and the Governor's Crime Commission.

I know you are also aware that I am the most experienced person ever nominated by you or Governor Hassan for this position. However, I am the only one who has faced such bias and tactical denial by the Executive Council.

What is appalling and indefensible is that Councilors Volinsky, Pignatelli and Cryans voted to confirm, within the last 12 months, a white nominee without experience and expertise. According to Councilor Volinsky, the nominee told these same councilors during his confirmation hearing that he had no experience or expertise and had no vision for the agency because he doesn't know the agency. However, when it came to me, not one of these councilors would vote with Councilors Gatsas and Prescott to schedule a confirmation hearing in any format over the last 105 days.

I'm not sure if there has ever been a better example of structural political racism. This is text book discrimination; delaying, redefining, denying, moving the goal post or using a different set of standards. I feel very strongly that no unqualified person should ever be appointed to any position based upon their ethnicity or race. Equally true, no elected official should use implicit bias to disqualify a qualified person. We too easily view this as just politics, its more than just politics. This is an attack on a citizen of this state for political gain.

Councilor Volinsky has said publicly that my political view regarding the Affordable Care Act is disqualifying. He was misleading on April 8<sup>th</sup> when he claimed that I would be overseeing the

licensing of health professionals. History shows that my personal beliefs have never prevented me from carrying out my public service responsibilities. As you know, this claim about the responsibilities of OPLC is totally untrue. By way of example; the board of medicine has the sole authority to approve, deny or revoke a license for physicians. As you are also aware the board members are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Council, not the Executive Director of OPLC. The Executive Director of OPLC is responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative functions that support the actions taken by the licensing and certifying authorities. This is the same process used by the liquor commission. Councilor Volinsky either intentionally provided false information or he does not fully understand the role of the Executive Director for OPLC. Frankly, neither is acceptable.

Councilor Volinsky knew two facts about me before falsely declaring that I had no experience or expertise and that he would oppose my nomination. He knew I was black and that I had run for Congress as a Republican. In New Hampshire we encourage people of all ages to become involved in their communities as demonstrated by the last three to four weeks. That community involvement of activism, running for political office, protesting and volunteering has always been an honorable characteristic in New Hampshire, until now. My engagement is apparently disqualifying. Councilors Volinsky, Pignatelli and Cryans have become the gatekeepers of beliefs and identity. It is unfortunate that the Councilors have decided to judge my qualifications through the lens of political racial alignment.

It should not come as a total surprise to Councilors Volinsky, Pignatelli and Cryans that I may have different beliefs, values and views about life from their own. I have experienced and seen what I believe to be destructive policies that led to disparities in health, housing, jobs, wealth and incarceration. I have experienced and witnessed most of the ugly things in life that are accompanied by violence and poverty. Naturally my personal experiences would inform and shape my political views.

I thought this was a settled issue in America and that I was free to express my views and belong to any political party of my choosing without fear of bias treatment from government. I never imagined until now, that I would be denied equality at the New Hampshire Executive Council table. Sadly, Councilors Pignatelli and Cryans have decided to walk in lock step with Councilor Volinsky to support the ugliest kind of elected behavior, structured political discrimination.

Black people, like me, who have chosen to walk in the valley of conservative personal beliefs are frequently attacked, marginalized and devalued as, "Tokens, Coons, Oreos, Uncle Toms and Sellouts." I have personally been singled out as "not one of our blacks." I have often said New Hampshire has the most important kind of diversity. We are lucky to have the deep diversity of thought. The structural tension of thought has created this great state. I do not believe our State and its residents are racist. I do not believe every negative interaction between blacks and whites is a racial incident. I do however believe that when we see clear discrimination (treating people differently based upon race or anything else) we should fight against it.

This is not the best of times in our nation and certainly not the best of times for our Executive Council. It is concerning, at this time of unrest in our nation, that Councilor Volinsky would hold a Black Lives Matter sign with the message “No Justice No Peace” and Councilor Pignatelli would change how she ended the Pledge to “With Justice for Some” claiming publically to fight for equality while both are actually busy behind closed doors creating inequalities. I have to ask, is my sin being a black republican who disagrees politically with three white liberals? Why would they support and cry out for justice in the streets for some and not others?

I am reminded of a Frederick Douglass quote; “are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in the Declaration of Independence, extended to us?”

Thank you again Sir, for your confidence in me and my qualifications.

It was an honor to have been nominated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eddie Edwards'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'E' and 'D'.

Eddie Edwards