

Dear Newcastle Council Members,

We are Eastside Pride PNW, a nonprofit on the Eastside, and as concerned Board Members, citizens and advocates for inclusivity, we are writing to express our deep disappointment and concern over your city's decision not to raise the Pride Flag or draft a Pride Proclamation this year. This decision breaks your four-year tradition of celebrating and supporting the LGBTQIA+ community and sends a troubling message to LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies in your city. Most, if not all of the cities on the Eastside have participated in raising the Pride Flag and have crafted Pride Proclamations for 2024.

For the past four years, the raising of the Pride Flag in your city and the creation of a Pride Proclamation has been a powerful symbol of the city's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equality. These gestures have not only acknowledged the historical and ongoing struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community but also celebrated the progress we have made together towards a more inclusive society.

Symbol of Acceptance and Belonging:

- The Pride Flag and Pride Proclamation represent acceptance, diversity, and unity.
- By flying the Pride flag your city sends a powerful message to all residents: "You belong here."
- For marginalized queer communities, the Pride Flag and Pride Proclamation serves as a beacon of hope, fostering resilience in a world that can be hostile.

Emotional Well-Being:

- When LGBTQIA+ individuals see the Pride Flag waving proudly, they feel acknowledged, valued, and part of a larger family.
- It says, "You're not alone; there are others like you who accept and love you."
- This sense of belonging contributes to emotional well-being and mental health.

Economic Benefits:

- Inclusive communities attract businesses, tourists, and new residents.
- When people perceive a place as welcoming and accepting, they are more likely to invest in it.
- Pride events, often associated with the flag, can boost local economies. Parades, festivals, and related activities draw visitors, generate revenue, and create jobs.
- Your town could benefit from increased tourism and positive publicity.

Promoting Tolerance and Understanding:

- The Pride Flag and Pride Proclamation encourage dialogue and education, prompting conversations about LGBTQIA+ rights, history, and challenges.
- By raising the Pride Flag, your city demonstrates your commitment to learning and understanding.
- Schools, workplaces, and public spaces can use the flag as a teaching tool to combat prejudice and foster empathy.

Acknowledging Discomfort and Encouraging Compassion:

- While some residents may object to raising the Pride Flag, and their concerns should be heard, progress and new ideas are essential for growth.
- We must not be chained to the past; instead, we should face the future with compassion and love.
- Your community thrives when everyone feels valued and respected.

In light of your decision, we urge the city to reconsider and to reaffirm its commitment to supporting all its residents, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Raising the Pride Flag and creating a Pride Proclamation are more than symbolic acts; they are statements of solidarity and a public declaration that your city stands against discrimination and for the equal rights of all its citizens. They're an investment in your community's future, celebrating our shared humanity, honoring our differences, and creating a space where everyone thrives.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to witnessing your town's renewed commitment to acceptance and unity.

Sincerely,

Eastside Pride PNW Board