

June 10, 2020

San Diego Pride
3620 30th Street
San Diego CA 92104



Mayor Kevin Faulconer
202 C St
San Diego CA 92104

Dear Mayor Faulconer,


Under your tenure as Mayor of the City of San Diego, you have been at the forefront of unity and equity for our city and region. You have been a pioneer of forward movement and vocal support for LGBTQ community on issues of justice and equality. Your legacy is one of advocacy for marriage equality and full federal equal protection under the law for LGBTQ Americans.

The time again has come for you to stand on the right side of history and Pride again asks you to stand with us in support of our Black LGBTQ and ally communities. We are asking you to join us in support of the following actions as a further step towards unity. Full details are in the attached document.

1. Law enforcement agencies will no longer have contingents in the San Diego Pride Parade or booths in our Pride Festival. This may be reassessed after the completion of step 4.
2. The City of San Diego will recognize the San Diego Pride Parade as a free speech event and no longer bill the organization for road closures and safety.
3. The City of San Diego will immediately adopt the #8CantWait Campaign recommendations.
4. Support a phased approach to policy reform recommendations centering Black LGBTQ San Diegans.

Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to again working with you on these important steps to progress and unity for our beautiful and beautifully diverse city.

In Solidarity,


Fernando Z López,
Executive Director
San Diego Pride

On behalf of the San Diego Pride board and staff.

Pride & Law Enforcement

A Path to Healing & Safer Communities



Progress, Protest, & Pride

Progress: For the last three decades, the overall relationship between the LGBTQ community and law enforcement has made incredible strides towards progress. Regional LGBTQ law enforcement agencies march in our Parade, have openly LGBTQ officers, retain LGBTQ advisory councils, created LGBTQ and Trans liaison positions, host an annual LGBTQ Law Enforcement Summit, and keep us safe at our events, marches, protests, and times of crisis. LGBTQ activists and law enforcement officers, many of whom are transgender and people of color, drove that change forward. The legacy of their work has built better policy reform, safer communities, and stronger relations.

Protest: The Black LGBTQ community, transgender community, and communities of color, however, feel left behind. For years, these communities have approached San Diego Pride and made public cries for support, as they attempt to explain the disparities they live through every day. Every year these calls for help echo with calls to protest or boycott Pride. These activists and community members believe we do not value their lived experiences. In 2015, the Pride Parade was delayed with a die-in led by trans activists of color out of anger at their lived disparity and Pride's lack of responsiveness. In 2019, the year of the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, saw renewed calls to protest Prides and direct action led by trans and people of color activists delayed nearly every single major Pride event in the county.

Pride: The San Diego Pride organization finds itself in the middle of these two lived realities. The progress is real and important. The lack of progress for our Black, trans, and people of color communities is also real and devastating. For 50 years, Pride events have grown and brought communities together, but this one issue is tearing us apart. The recent civil unrest across the nation sparked by the recent killings of unarmed Black Americans have brought new light to this issue and is deepening the fractures within our community. Something needs to change. In the name of the lives and safety for everyone in our community, we need to find a path to come together, honor both lived realities, and heal. We hope to find that path together with you.





History: The Stonewall Riots of 1969 that sparked the modern-day Pride and LGBTQ movements were a direct result of state-sanctioned police brutality. Years of systemic legal and social oppression of the LGBTQ community had reached a tipping point. Three days of riots turned to peaceful protest marches and demonstrations across the country. The Gay Liberation Front formed and chapters began to pop up around the nation to organize our community, build visibility, and work for policy and legal reform.

In San Diego and many other parts of the nation, the Gay Liberation Front held demonstrations focused on law enforcement as, at the time, we were being criminalized and targeted by police in our homes, schools, bars, and workplaces. In 1970 and 1971, “Gay-ins” were held in San Diego as solidarity events to what would later be called Pride. In 1971, the Gay Liberation Front bravely protested the San Diego Police to condemn the criminalization and abuse on the part of the department.

In 1973, the GLF held a regional conference to strategize our movement between regional LGBTQ serving organizations, and in 1974, the first Pride March was held without a permit. 1975 was the first time San Diego Pride was granted a permit for our annual march. “Homosexual acts” were not decriminalized in California until 1976, at that point in our state, it was legal to lobotomize gay men.

Federally, the anti-sodomy laws were not eliminated until 2003’s Supreme Court Case, *Lawrence v Texas* citing the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.



Pride & Law Enforcement: As public sentiment towards the LGBTQ community shifted over the decades, so did support from within our region's elected officials and tensions began to ease as a whole between the LGBTQ community and law enforcement. San Diego Mayors and Chiefs of Police began down a path that created LGBTQ Advisory Councils and LGBTQ Liaisons, to serve as a bridge to the LGBTQ community with hopes of not only better relationships, but better public service.

Over the years, these relationships have been instrumental in giving the broader LGBTQ community a voice and a seat at the table. San Diego Pride and our community have worked with law enforcement officers and agencies and have witnessed firsthand how vital these relationships are in times of crisis when our safety and lives are being threatened.

In San Diego, from the Parade tear gas attack in 1999, Festival baseball attack of 2006, or the repeated death threats Pride receives every single year since the Pulse Massacre in 2016 – our local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies have worked tirelessly to protect our LGBTQ community. We could not be more grateful for their work.

Progress hasn't always gone smoothly. In 1986, several police officers attacked 39-year-old Brian Barlow who was marching in the San Diego Pride Parade with the San Francisco Gay Freedom Marching Band. In 2011, 30-year-old Will Walters was arrested and cited for public nudity while wearing kilt-like clothing over a thong, despite the 104 public nudity citations issued by the city from 2007 to 2012, none except Walters' was for someone in a thong. Walters later died by suicide over the anguish of this incident.

While much progress has been made, our LGBTQ Black community has been telling us for years that we as Pride and our regional law enforcement agencies have to do better. They are not alone. Data, our Black, LGBTQ, POC, Transgender, and now entire community are saying we have to do better.

[Campaign Zero Police: Police Score Card for San Diego](#) data showed deep disparities in Black and LGBTQ communities leaving those at the intersection of these identities particularly at risk; especially Black trans women. The report shows SDPD stopped Black people at 219% higher rates than white people. LGBTQ people were arrested without a warrant at 38% higher rates than non-LGBTQ people.



Path Forward: San Diego Pride, while centering our Black community's voice, lived experience, and concerns, is embarking on an intentional phased approach with the Mayor, Police Chief, organizations, leaders, and community members to reform the system of policing and our LGBTQ community's relationship with law enforcement agencies with the goal of safer communities for all.

Step 1: In response to the Black LGBTQ community's requests, San Diego Pride's position is now that law enforcement agencies will not be permitted to have a contingent in the Pride Parade or Booth at the Pride Festival. Relationship building needs focused conversations. The Parade and Festival do not represent the opportunities for that dialogue. Reassessment of this position may occur if desired after the conclusion of step four. Everyone is still welcome to march, volunteer, and enjoy at Pride.

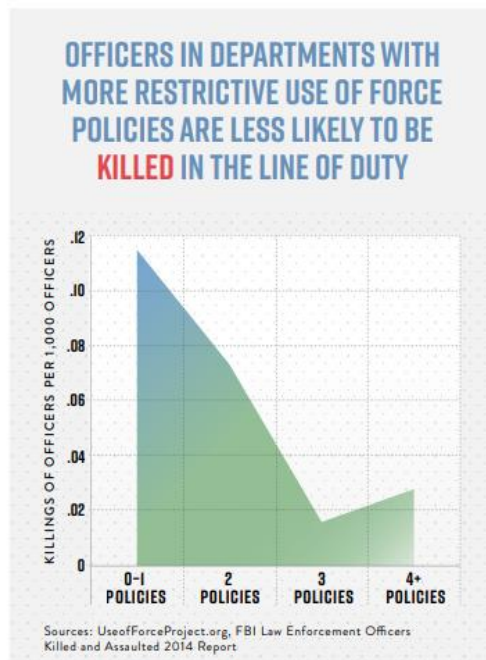
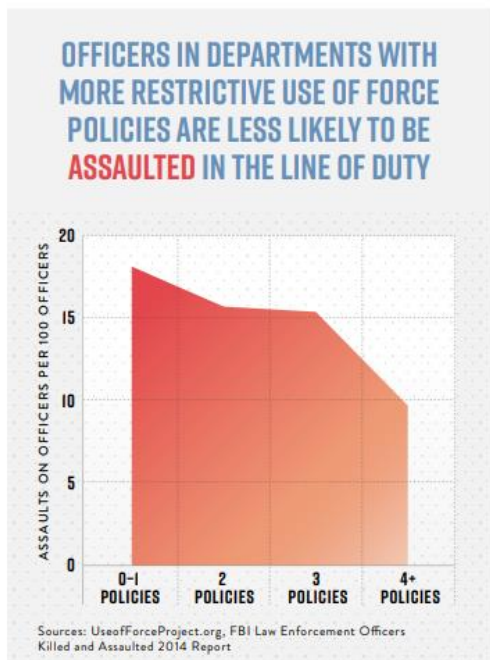
San Diego Pride will continue to maintain our relationships with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to continue serving as a bridge to our community and ensure community safety remains our number one priority. Law enforcement agencies will oversee road closures and vital safety precautions in coordination with Pride's leadership team.

Step 2: San Diego Pride requests that The City of San Diego recognize the annual Pride March as a free speech event and will no longer bill San Diego Pride for police or other city fees associated with the event. San Diego Pride will use these savings to enhance the safety of our event through other groups and tools. The remaining savings will fund Black-led LGBTQ programming.



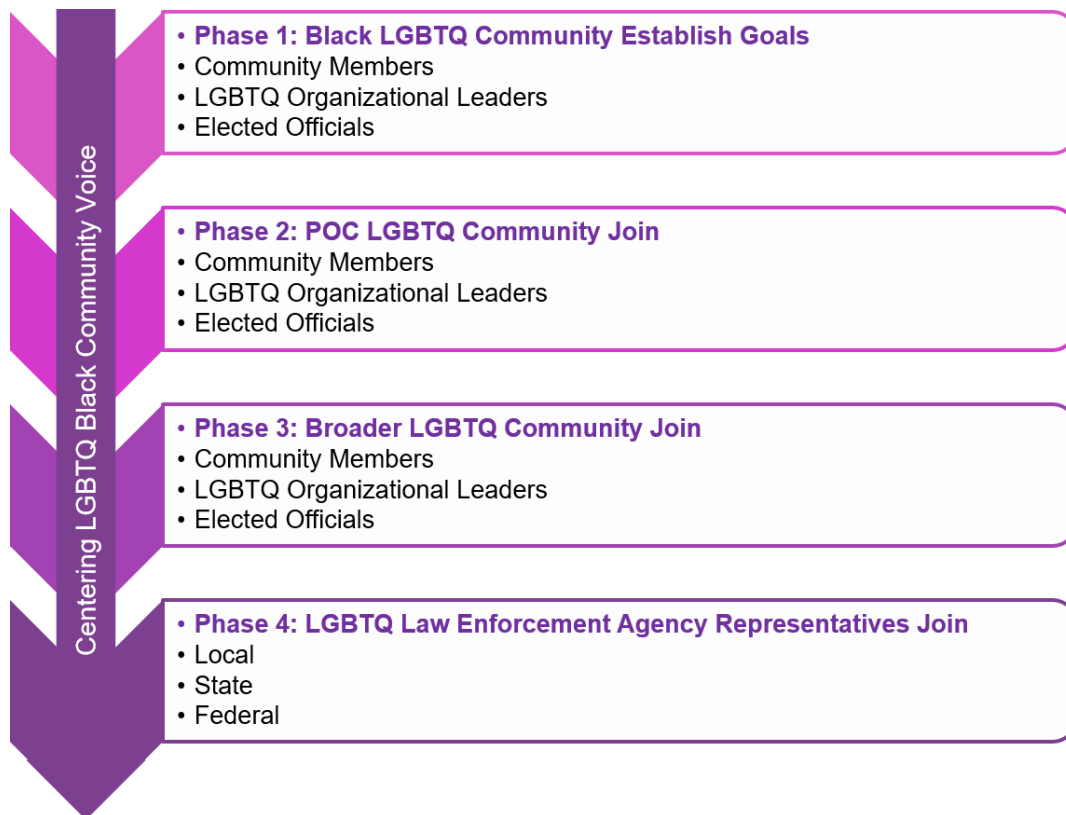
Step 3: San Diego Pride asks the Mayor show compassion, using “strong Mayor” authority, and enact all remaining items in the [#8CANTWAIT campaign](#): ban chokeholds and strangleholds, require de-escalation, duty to intervene, ban shooting at moving vehicles, and require all force be reported.

Data tells us those cities that enact all eight of these policies reduce killings by police by up to 72%. These policies also create a safer work environment for officers, reducing assault and death.



Step 4: San Diego Pride will host a series of intentional conversations centering Black LGBTQ voices to identify tangible reform, accountability, and transparency goals for law enforcement agencies. Pride will also amplify other issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our region arising from these conversations. These phased conversations will include LGBTQ organization leaders, elected officials and community members. We will work as an organization and in coalition to realize these goals.

While we will inform law enforcement of the progress of these conversations, we will wait to welcome LGBTQ law enforcement representatives to the table once tangible goals have been set in step four.



Healing & Coming Together: In 1990 San Diego Police Department Officer John Graham risked his career and became the first openly gay law enforcement officer to march in the Pride Parade. At the time, the act was so controversial that then Executive Director, Barbra Blake, received death threats and had to have a police escort at the event. Behind Officer Graham was a black vehicle with blacked-out windows. Inside that vehicle were other LGBTQ officers who were too afraid to come forward. As John passed the law enforcement officers along the route they all turned their back to him.

In 1991, a group of officers – some LGBTQ, some allies – joined Officer Graham to walk in the Parade.



San Diego Pride is not turning our back on LGBTQ law enforcement officers or any agency. What we are doing is saying that now is a time to take a moment to pause and reassess how we can heal and make progress in the name of public safety. The collective desire for real change has never been more urgent and never felt more within reach.

We remain committed to harm reduction tactics like public education and cultural competency training for law enforcement agencies. We will continue to participate in the annual LGBTQ Law Enforcement Summit. We will continue to work to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ incarcerated community members. We will continue to amplify the good work being done by our Mayor, our Police Chief, and any law enforcement officer or agency who is doing meaningful work for our community.

We look forward to forging a new and better path together with you that centers our LGBTQ Black Community. We look forward to a day when we all feel safe and welcome in all places, especially Pride.



