

October 21, 2017

Senator Bernie Sanders
c/o Friends of Bernie Sanders
P.O. Box 391
Burlington VT 05402

Dear Senator:

We are Democratic activists in Cambridge, Massachusetts who are disappointed that Senator Sanders has apparently endorsed six candidates in a non-partisan city council race with 26 candidates, most of whom are equally progressive.

We hope that your endorsement comes from lack of information about this particular election. Cambridge is as progressive a city as any in the country. The vast majority of its voters are united on the importance of economic inequality as an issue. The 26 candidates for the nine seats on city council are diverse in age, race/ethnicity and personal experience, but the majority are proudly progressive. In other words, this is not an election pitting a progressive slate versus a conservative slate, or even an "establishment Democratic" slate. The candidates mainly differ on their personal backgrounds and on local issues.

How--and why? -- does a national leader like you choose between these candidates? To illustrate the dilemma, consider these six candidates as examples (and there are more examples). You apparently endorsed one, and found the others not worthy of your endorsement. Do you know which one you endorsed and can you explain how they differ?

-- Samuel Gebru is an Ethiopian American with a consulting practice that strengthens US-Ethiopia Relations and is executive producer of Boston Ethiopia Week. His issues are resistance to the Trump administration, economic justice, environment, affordable housing development, education and 21st century skills and building an inclusive city.

-- Richard Harding is longtime school committee member with a strong proven record of initiating progressive policies. As an African American man who grew up in public housing in Cambridge, he is a mentor to many. In addition to serving on the school committee, he has been a public health advocate working with our local community-based hospital. His work has a particular focus on the health and well-being of African American men.

-- Alanna Mallon, a woman committed to ending childhood hunger, started the Cambridge Weekend Backpack Program that weekly gives hundreds of hungry Cambridge kids food for the weekend when they don't have access to school breakfast and lunch, all packaged in a plain backpack in order to preserve their privacy. She currently runs the Food for Free program.

-- Marc McGovern, a social worker who has committed his career to helping disadvantaged children with disabilities and their families, wrote a recent City Council policy order protecting DREAMers in Cambridge, created a legal fund to support immigrants settling in Cambridge and organized the Boston regional homeless summit.

-- Sumbul Siddiqui is currently an attorney at Northeast Legal Aid whose activism earned a Cambridge Peace and Justice award. The issues that matter to her include affordable housing, supporting small businesses, civic engagement, the sustainability of our city, the health and safety of our neighbors and government accountability.

-- Denise Simmons, the first black lesbian mayor in the United States who has been a leader on affordable housing issues throughout her time on the Cambridge City Council, most recently increasing the required percentage of affordable housing that private developers must build and requiring commercial developers to pay a higher fee to subsidize new affordable housing

If the answer is that you rely on the local Our Revolution organization to nominate candidates for endorsement, you lose control of the process they use and expose yourself to the risk that the local organization will nominate candidates based on their agenda and not yours. Some of us are familiar with the process used by OR-Cambridge and believe it was not transparent and open. All of us are concerned that the candidates were chosen without regard to whether they differ on the economic and social justice principles that are your platform.

Whether you intended it or not, the result of this endorsement is that you appear to have aligned yourself with one particular side of how the city should deal with the need to build housing in the Greater Boston region (five of the six are on a slate dominated by that issue). This is not something in the Our Revolution platform—or what you intended when the 2016 campaign inspired many to continue your work after November.

Senator Sanders, some of the signatories in this letter worked for you in the Democratic primary, some of us worked for Secretary Hillary Clinton. We are all working to resist and confront the Trump administration. We support various candidates in the city council race, including some of those you apparently endorsed. There are many races around the country, including some local ones, where a progressive voice is needed. Intervening in the Cambridge city council race is a counterproductive choice and divides, rather than unites, progressives here.

Sincerely,

Nancy Alach
Mo Barbosa
Dan Bartley
Sharon Britton
Jim Cornie
Marjorie Decker
Larry Field
Carolyn Fuller
Helen Glikman
Mitch Goldstein
Victoria Harris
Mary Ann Hart
Jesse Kanson-Benanov
Elizabeth Kline
Margaret Levin
Arthur Lipkin

Elyse Magnotto
Bill McAvinney
Gerry McDonough
Joel Patterson
Maura Pensak
Ruth Ryals
Sam Seidel
Cheryl Suchors
Ali Sullo
David Sullivan
Alice Wolf