



July 25, 2023

Mayor John Lampl and Morrow City Council
Morrow City Hall
1500 Morrow Road
Morrow, GA 30260

Dear Mayor Lampl and City Council Members,

The undersigned Georgia voting and immigrant rights organizations write to you to express our deep concern about and disapproval of the inaccurate and anti-immigrant statements made by City of

Morrow Councilwoman, Dorothy Dean, towards her colleague, Councilwoman Van Tran, at a city council meeting on July 18.

In her comments, councilwoman Dean admonished councilwoman Tran for “want[ing] to get a petition signed to include another country’s language on the American voting ballot” instead of “encouraging citizens to learn to speak, read, and write the language in which they are citizens of this country.” In addition to condemning Councilwoman Dean’s blatant xenophobia, we—as immigrant and voting rights organizations—would like to bring attention to the dangerously inaccurate implications of her remarks.

Contrary to Councilwoman Dean’s insistence that her colleague’s actions have been “un-American” and “inexcusable,” there is no official language—English or otherwise—in the state of Georgia or in the United States. Moreover, there are protections in place to ensure that individuals who speak languages other than English are protected and have access to the rights and services to which they are entitled. In Georgia alone, Gwinnett County is required to provide translated ballots along with other election materials in Spanish due to protections guaranteed to language minority voters under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act. This provision of federal law specifically acknowledges that many U.S. citizens use languages other than English and implements protections in order to ensure that those individuals are able to meaningfully participate in the democratic process.

We ask that Councilwoman Dean take accountability for her actions and issue a formal apology to Councilwoman Tran. Morrow is one of Georgia’s most diverse cities, with Asian, Latinx/Hispanic, and Black citizens of African, Jamaican, Somali, and Haitian descent who belong to multilingual communities. Shaming those who work to make civic engagement more accessible in their communities is not the answer. Instead, we encourage Councilwoman Dean, Mayor Lampl, and the entire Morrow City Council to work with Clayton County and look to other Georgia municipalities and counties including Athens-Clarke, DeKalb, and Gwinnett counties to learn more about how to make elections more accessible to all Morrow voters.

Councilwoman Dean’s comments are unfortunately exemplary of the far-reaching effects of linguistic discrimination. Instead of expecting immigrants to give up their language and assimilate, we call on Morrow City Council and leaders across Georgia to embrace differences and imagine how to expand opportunities for all.

Signed,

Act2Change
All Voting is Local
Athena's Warehouse, Inc.
Arkansas United Community Coalition
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
Asian American Advocacy Fund
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
CAIR-Georgia
Caminar Latino
Care in Action
CASA
Coalition of Latino Leaders (CLILA)
Coalition for the People's Agenda
Community Estrella
Eritrean American Community Association-Georgia
Galeo Impact Fund
Galeo Latino Community Development Fund
Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights
Georgia Muslim Voter Project
Fair Fight
Migrant Equity Southeast
National Domestic Worker's Alliance
New Disabled South
Latin American Association
Los Ninos Primero
New Georgia Project
Refugee Women's Network
U-Lead Athens
We Love Buford Highway
Women Watch Afrika