



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

Latin American Association

Latino Community Fund

Los Ninos Primero

Migrant Equity Southeast

National Domestic Worker's Alliance

New Disabled South

New Georgia Project

Poder Latinx

Protect the Vote - GA

Refugee Women's Network

U-Lead Athens

We Love Buford Highway

Women Watch Afrika

