

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2023

The Honorable Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division,
Department of Justice,
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

As elected officials representing districts that are predominantly communities of color in Tarrant County, we are deeply concerned that recent actions by Tarrant County Judge Tim O'Hare and other county officials will further diminish the voting rights of those we represent and undermine their ability to freely and effectively participate in elections. We request that the United States Department of Justice promptly review this matter and provide us with a written response about steps that the Civil Rights Division can deploy to end the pattern in Tarrant County of voter intimidation and harassment. We also are concerned with the lack of transparency regarding the creation of recent county-level "election integrity" task forces. We are prepared to meet with you to better understand what additional resources and/or authority would benefit your office to ensure the right to vote is protected across Texas and the country.

On April 16, 2023, Tarrant County Elections Administrator Heider Garcia announced his resignation effective as of June 23, 2023, after a meeting with Tarrant County Judge O'Hare. In his resignation letter, Mr. Garcia stated directly to Judge O'Hare, "*... my formula to 'administer a quality transparent election' stands on respect and zero politics; compromising on these values is not an option for me. You made it clear in our last meeting that your formula is different, thus, my decision to leave.*"

This resignation is deeply troubling to us given the work Mr. Garcia has undertaken during his tenure to ensure elections are fair to all voters, including racial and ethnic minority voters, in Tarrant County. Since 2020, Mr. Garcia [has faced harassment and even death threats](#) from groups that have denied recent election results, including "Citizens for Election Integrity" and the "True Texas Project", [which has been named as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center](#). These actions are intended to intimidate Mr. Garcia and send a message to minority voters that if they participate in Tarrant County elections, they will face investigation and prosecution. Mr. Garcia detailed some of the harassment and threats he received in testimony he provided to the Texas Legislature; a copy of his testimony is attached.

County Judge O'Hare has consistently challenged Mr. Garcia's efforts to uphold the integrity and racial fairness of our elections. Without evidence or other substantive factual information,

Judge O'Hare questioned the validity of the 2020 Presidential elections and challenged the actions of Mr. Garcia and the Tarrant County Elections Administration office. Once in office, Judge O'Hare joined with the extremist group True Texas Project-supported officials, Sheriff Bill Waybourn and District Attorney Phil Sorrells [to create an unwarranted voter fraud unit to investigate and prosecute so-called "voter fraud"](#). This unit was created without notice or any meaningful input from other county elected officials.

During his campaign for Tarrant County Judge, Tim O'Hare ran on an election-denier platform and had the support of the True Texas Project. [He continues to meet with True Texas Project](#) and did so just prior to the meeting which resulted in Mr. Garcia's resignation. He has continued to operate in a unilateral fashion leading to contentious exchanges with other commissioners, [especially those related to Mr. Garcia and to election matters](#).

Tarrant is a large urban county in north Texas with over 1.8 million residents. It includes the city of Fort Worth, the City of Arlington, and several other smaller municipalities. It is a majority-minority county with Anglos at 42.9% of the population, Hispanics at 29.4%, Blacks at 17%, and Asian and other ethnicities making up 10.7 percent.

Statements made leading up to the 2020 elections and the actions taken since then by the County Judge, the County District Attorney, and the County Sheriff appear to be designed to undermine and suppress minority voter participation in Tarrant County elections. These actions are being taken without discussion or input of any type from those of us who represent most of the minority citizens in Tarrant County.

We respectfully ask that you give your prompt attention to this matter. Specifically, we ask your office to conduct a federal investigation into the County Judge's actions to protect minority voters in Tarrant County from harassment and discrimination. We also are interested in learning the steps the U.S. Department of Justice is taking to combat voter-suppression tactics disguised as so-called "Election Integrity" task forces. We would appreciate any possible assistance in determining if any improper actions have been taken to undermine the rights of our constituents to participate in elections and to realize the value and effectiveness of their vote.

Congressman Veasey's legal counsel, J. Gerald Hebert, will contact you shortly to set up a meeting where we can provide additional information to you. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Hon. Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Hon. Salman Bohjani
Texas House Member



Hon. Nicole Collier
Texas House Member



Hon. Chris Turner
Texas House Member



Hon. Ramon Romero
Texas House Member



Hon. Roy C. Brooks
Commissioner, Tarrant County, Texas



Hon. Alisa Simmons
Commissioner, Tarrant County, Texas