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## *House of Representatives*

COVERDELL LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
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STANDING COMMITTEES  
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Ways and Means

The Honorable J. Collins  
Chairman, Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee  
Coverdell Legislative Office Building, Suite 408  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Chairman Collins,

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep communities in Georgia safe. You and your committee have led on public safety issues facing our state. I'm proud to have worked alongside you on several priorities, including our legislation to stop local governments from defunding the police. That legislation spurred from efforts in Athens to cut 50% of our police department's budget. Since that time, our Commission has decided to appoint a so-called civilian police oversight board. Unfortunately, that process has been tainted, and that's why I'm writing today.

I request your committee look what is happening in Athens-Clarke County (ACC) with our Public Safety Civilian Oversight Board. Recent media reports have shown that the ACC Commission intentionally conspired to prevent conservatives from being appointed to this board. The Commission, which is responsible for appointing local governing bodies, deliberately manipulated the interview process to shut out conservative political opponents - and award appointments exclusively to progressive candidates who aligned with their own radical agendas.

Text messages, which I've attached to this letter, show that ACC Commissioners changed their scores for candidates they interviewed to remove conservatives from consideration and ensure their preferred picks were selected. Those text messages include a message from Commissioner Tim Denson to Commissioner Mariah Parker saying, "Try to make your math work so the "conservative" people don't make it." The text messages show a clear bias - and a shady effort to keep conservatives off a local board responsible for public safety policy in our city. Although it's not surprising that the same Commissioners who attempted to defund our local police department in 2020 are now attempting to remove conservative opposition from the Police Oversight Board, it is unquestionably wrong.

I call on the Commission to dissolve the board and restart the recruitment process - this time, without manipulating it for personal political gain. At a time when we're seeing increased crime, Athenians deserve a fair selection process and a diverse board - not one hand-picked to promote the 'defund the police' agenda via secret texts. If the Commission doesn't do so, I respectfully request your Committee consider holding hearings on this matter to ensure the law was followed - and that the General Assembly look to find ways to protect Athens and other communities from such decisions in the future.

Thank you again for your great work leading the Public Safety Committee and for your service.

Respectfully,

Houston Gaines  
State Representative – District 117

< Tim Denson, Mariah ... (2)  
2 recipients

Friday, January 28, 2022



Tim Denson

Y'all should jump on that spreadsheet for 📄 and put in your recommendations. Ovita put in some weird shit and otherwise it's just me and Kelly.

MMS



Mariah Parker

Liked "Y'all should jump on that spreadsheet for 📄 and put in your recommendations. Ovita put in some weird shit and otherwise it's just me and Kelly."

MMS

5:56 PM

MMS  
6:29 PM

Will do. We also gotta look at the math, I am questioning this point of arrival.



Mariah Parker

what did OT do???

MMS

6:31 PM



Tim Denson

ovita placed a bunch of tens for random people, and then she voted for some people who she wasn't even in the interview for

MMS

6:32 PM



Mariah Parker



MMS

6:33 PM



Tim Denson

I do feel confident that we are going to end up with a good Board. Try to make your math work so the "conservative" people don't make it.

MMS

6:39