

Hello,

My name is Paola Andrea Mendez Carreno, and I am honored to be writing to express my interest in joining the Somerville Human Rights Commission.

I have immense pride in the identities that I hold as a queer, non-binary, Puerto Rican, and Chilean individual living in Somerville. My upbringing was shaped by my cultural backgrounds, and it ignited my passion in advocating for human rights. As a child, I faced the socio-economic challenges of migrating to the continental United States. I watched my parents lay the foundation for a new life for my brother and I; their unwavering sacrifices, courage in the face of insecurities, and persistence taught me the resilience that I know today. These experiences built my commitment to the safety, dignity, and respect of my community, as well as to those whose struggles I have not experienced but who equally deserve compassion and justice.

My dedication to creating a more inclusive Somerville is evidenced by my being a recipient of the Somerville-Lesley ARPA Scholarship. As an ARPA scholar, I promised to be an agent of change in this city, and being a member of the Human Rights Commission would allow me to continue keeping that promise. This role would offer me the opportunity to give back to the city that I cherish while advocating for the protection and celebration of all its residents.

In addition to my personal background, my work in the field of mental health and art therapy would bring a unique and valuable perspective to the Commission. As an art therapist, I work with hospice and pediatric palliative patients. Through this work, I continue to learn the impact that empathy, compassion, and advocacy can have. My clients come from various cultural backgrounds, and when differences arise, we approach them together with curiosity, care, and respect. Trauma-informed approaches are central to my work, and that is a trait that I believe is crucial for any member of the Human Rights Commission as violations of safety and dignity can inflict long-term damage.

As an art therapist, a future licensed mental health counselor, and a resident of Somerville, I believe that when community members listen deeply and respond thoughtfully to those who have been harmed, we strengthen the fabric of our community. I would be truly honored to bring my identities, experience, and dedication to Somerville as a member of the Human Rights Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warmly,

Paola Andrea Mendez Carreno