

My name is Ashley Guevara (she/her) and I'm writing to express my interest in joining the Human Rights Commission for the city of Somerville.

I have been a Somerville resident since 2003. My partner has lived here for his entire life (at the same address in fact!), and we have chosen to raise our family here in Somerville in the same home in which he grew up. Throughout the time I have lived here I have felt increasingly connected to the Somerville community. I first moved to Somerville to attend Tufts University and was very interested in seeing the strengths as well as the significant challenges posed by the relationship between the school and the city. Now 20+ years later I am the mother of young twins who are in kindergarten at the Argenziano School, and have also seen my nieces and nephews move all the way through the Somerville Public School system from pre-kindergarten through high school graduation. I am a member of the Van Hardy Community Garden, and have been a part of our ongoing conversation and collaboration with the developers who are building affordable housing adjacent to our garden in order to retain community access to the space and to ensure that we don't lose the green space that is so vital to our neighborhood. I am a strong advocate for mutual aid and have sought opportunities to participate in providing for my community, the importance of which became significantly clearer to me throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those lessons have pushed me to continue advocating for my neighbors across background and identity. I have also watched as folks who have spent their lives here have slowly lost the ability to pay the skyrocketing rent required to remain in the city they love so much, and feel strongly about keeping Somerville affordable for all who want to be part of our community.

My family and I are living in a household that is multi-generational, multi-lingual, multi-racial, and of mixed immigration status. I am deeply committed to the rights of all of our community members, but in particular those who are most marginalized. In my professional life I am a clinical social worker with a small agency that serves young people who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation and other severe traumas, the majority of whom are youth of color, 40% of whom identify as LGBTQIA+, and most of whom come from communities that are severely underserved. Throughout my career I have supported youth and families who are unhoused or insecurely housed, who have little to no income, who experience food insecurity, who have significant intergenerational trauma, who struggle with mental health and substance use disorders, who have been incarcerated, and who have been trapped in systems that are designed to prevent their upward mobility. I am passionate about my work and it has underscored for me how important it is that we all show up for and take care of one another.

As a white person I recognize how much the privileges I hold have provided me with resources and opportunities that I would not necessarily have had access to if I didn't hold

these identities. I am able-bodied, I have a graduate-level education, I am raising my children in a two-parent and two-income household, and I do not routinely have to worry about where my next paycheck, meal, or rent payment will come from. At the same time, as a queer, neurodivergent, polyamorous woman I can also recognize the many ways in which my rights and the rights of my family, neighbors, and friends remain in question, and in the midst of seemingly endless national and international crises, most of which would be avoidable if folks were committed to caring for one another, it is clear to me just how tenuous those rights are at any given moment.

If given the opportunity I would be honored to join the Human Rights Commission for the city of Somerville to continue fighting and advocating for the rights of my fellow community members. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Ashley Guevara