

January 5, 2014

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I am writing to express my support of the recent policy changes put in place by the Harris County Sheriff's Office, both in dealing with inmates and in employment issues. As a leader in Houston's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex, LGBTI, communities, and a transgender male, I am honored to be a part of the Sheriff's Office's committee that is working on the policy and Standard Operating Procedures.

Sheriff Garcia and his team wanted to ensure that not only did they incorporate the best practices of what other institutions have employed, but they also wanted to go beyond them to set a new standard for comprehensive LGBTI policy. The goal was to ensure that all aspects of an individual's encounter with HCSO personnel and any subsequent stays in detention would be as harmless as possible on the civilian/inmate.

I am happy to report that the new policy exceeds my expectations, addressing not only physical safety but that of the civilian/inmate's mental and emotional well-being too. Being incarcerated is mentally and emotionally stressful enough without feeling disrespected, judged and traumatized at the same time.

For a transgender or gender non-conforming individual it is incredibly important to be seen and recognized as who you are, and the HCSO has written a policy that aims to maintain the physical, mental and emotional well-being of all of its inmates. The current policy is above and beyond anything else we could find.

I am proud to see HCSO leading the way on LGBTI issues and acknowledging that everyone deserves a safe environment to serve out their sentence. I am proud to be a part of such a ground breaking initiative and am happy knowing that LGBTI individuals will be safer and healthier during their time in Harris County Jails.

Respectfully submitted,



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