



CITY OF CLEVELAND  
Office of the Council

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**Blaine A. Griffin**  
PRESIDENT OF CITY COUNCIL

August 14, 2025

Councilmember Joseph T. Jones:

We are in receipt of two investigation reports dated August 8, 2025 (amended August 12, 2025), after outside investigations of two recent, separate incidents in which you exhibited inappropriate, unprofessional behavior in the workplace that likely violated Council's Workplace Violence Policy (Section 5.21 of the Employee Handbook) and adversely impacted workplace morale, employee confidence and the integrity of the office. These most recent incidents are new and separate from the 6 incidents of harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation, and bullying behavior by you that were investigated in 2024, for which you were previously reprimanded and corrective actions taken. (See letter of reprimand dated July 29, 2024 and memorandum to council members and staff dated February 7, 2025.)

Consider this letter a reprimand of your continued inappropriate and unprofessional conduct as set forth below, even after corrective and disciplinary actions were taken against you following the 2024 investigation.

**Incident 1:** On May 19, 2025, during an interaction in the office of Witness 1, you threatened three times in a row that you would kill Witness 1. The third time you said you would kill Witness 1 "on his motorcycle."

**Incident 2:** Also, on May 19, 2025 during the Council meeting that evening, you sat directly next to Witness 2 for approximately 5 minutes, despite other available seats (including your own) and despite previous instructions prohibiting contact with Witness 2, due to prior incidents between you and Witness 2. The following day, your executive assistant called Witness 2 five times within 24 hours about a project. Witness 2 suspects that you directed these calls. Witness 2 also stated that you have a pattern of making repeated complaints to council leadership about Witness 2's work, causing Witness 2 to repeatedly justify their actions and document their work.

**Investigation Findings:** Both witnesses were found credible and the facts of both Incident 1 and Incident 2 are not in dispute: the day after Incident 1, you acknowledged threatening Witness 1 that you would kill them and there is video evidence of Incident 2. In addition, two anonymous complaints were filed with the Clerk, one for each Incident 1 and Incident 2.

In addition to the policies set forth under Council's Workplace Violence Policy, Council has adopted the City of Cleveland 2024 Workplace Violence Policy. The City's Workplace Violence Policy defines workplace violence to include "threatening remarks" and "bullying, intimidating or harassing another person". The investigations revealed that your remarks that you would kill Witness 1, which were perceived as a threat, as well as your conduct sitting in direct vicinity of Witness 2 after being told to have no contact and allegedly prompting your assistant to repeatedly call Witness 2, likely amount to making threatening remarks and bullying, intimidating, and harassing another person in violation of Council's Workplace Violence Policy.

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**Additional Policy Violations:** In addition to the noted possible violations of Council’s Workplace Violence Policy, your behavior likely also violates Council’s Standards of Conduct Policy (both of which you received on March 6, 2025, as acknowledged by your signature). The behavior and conduct you exhibited during Incidents 1 and 2 are prohibited under the Standards of Conduct Policy including “harassment”, “engaging in abusive or threatening behavior toward staff members or colleagues”, “engaging in conduct that creates a hostile work environment”, “bullying”, and violating the City Council policies including policies in the Employee Handbook.

**Impact on witnesses:** Both witnesses report anxiety, stress, and concerns for their safety, as well as the safety of their family members. Both witnesses are concerned about retaliation. Witness 2 was left feeling both panicked and angry after Incident 2, and is concerned about continued harassment. Witness 1 has declined to file an official police report, although Witness 1 did report the threat to the FBI. Both witnesses have sought mental health support through the City’s Employee Assistance Program. Neither witness wants direct contact with you.

**Your Interview with Investigator:** According to the outside investigator, because there were “various delays stemming from... [your] responses to multiple requests for an interview and limitations on ...[your] legal counsel’s availability”, you were not interviewed until August 11, 2025. The reports were amended to include your interview with the investigator.

Regarding Incident 1, you denied stating that you would kill Witness 1, but admitted you may have said “I’ll blow you up on your motorcycle” which you characterized as a joke with no malicious intent. This is a distinction without a difference: blowing up a person would certainly kill them. The serious nature of the comment, explicitly referencing death or serious bodily harm, constitutes a threatening remark that likely violates Council’s Workplace Violence Policy and Standards of Conduct Policy. Note that, as you requested, the investigator talked with the student you said observed Incident 1 but found the student not credible and inconsequential to the conclusions in the report.

Regarding Incident 2, you stated that you did not realize you were sitting next to Witness 2 until after being seated for 2-3 minutes. You indicated you did not believe sitting next to Witness 2 was a violation of the no contact directive, because you thought that directive meant no communications with Witness 2, but did not prohibit incidental proximity. You said you did not intend to violate that directive and there is no objective evidence contradicting the stated lack of intent. Further, you deny any intent to harass or intimidate by causing your executive assistant to repeatedly call Witness 2, and your executive assistant denies being asked by you to call Witness 2 for harassment purposes. Neither you nor your executive assistant recall calling Witness 2 five times over 24 hours. The investigation suggests that your lack of intent mitigates your actions during the Council meeting. However, considering the documented history between you and Witness 2, including incidents investigated previously, your unawareness of where you seated yourself – especially when other seats were open, including your own – shows a complete disregard for the disciplinary actions taken after the first investigation. Whether intended or not, ignorance of Witness 2’s seat at the Council meeting is inexcusable considering previous warnings and reprimands.

**Behavioral Expectations:** Mr. Jones, as are all members of Council, the Clerk, and staff, you are expected and required to maintain a high standard of professionalism in all workplace interactions, including communication, appearance, and demeanor. You are expected to treat all colleagues, staff and stakeholders with respect, dignity, and fairness. To be clear, **you are prohibited from acting in any manner that may be a violation of Council’s Standards of Conduct Policy, Workplace Violence Policy, and Sexual Harassment and Other Unlawful Harassment Policy including, but not limited to: making verbal, written or electronic threatening remarks to colleagues or staff; aggressive or hostile acts such as shouting and using profanity; and bullying, intimidating, or harassing another person.** Further, any form of **retaliation is prohibited.**

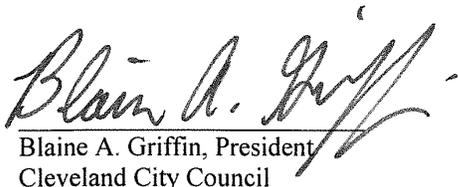
**Direct Communication Prohibited:** You are hereby notified that you are not to initiate direct communication with either Witness 1 or Witness 2, including in-person, phone, text or email contact, whether personally or through intermediaries, including through your executive assistant. You are prohibited from being in physical proximity to Witness 1 or Witness 2 in professional settings, which includes sitting near or adjacent to Witness 1 or Witness 2 during Council meetings, Council committee hearings, Council caucus meetings or other official meetings or events. All necessary work-related communications must go through a designated third party for Witness 1 and Witness 2.

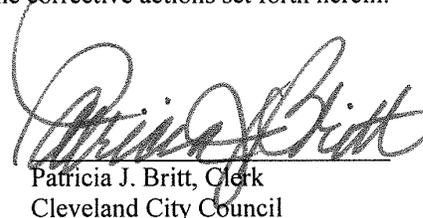
**Required Training:** You are required to attend one-on-one workplace conduct and threat awareness training with a workplace behavior specialist. The training will focus on prohibited threats and intimidation, professional communication, respectful workplace interactions and sensitivity to power dynamics as an elected official and boundary-setting, as well as appropriate workplace conduct, anti-retaliation principles and the impact of intimidation and bullying on staff safety and morale.

**Continued Suspension from Committee Duties:** You are hereby informed that your suspension from all committee duties will continue, at least until the end of the term. You will continue to be suspended from your role as chair of the Mayor's Appointment Committee and you will remain removed from all committee assignments. Because of your continued inappropriate and unprofessional behavior even after corrective and disciplinary measures were taken after the 2024 investigation, ***you are prohibited from participating in any way in scheduled committee hearings; you may not sit at the table during committee hearings; you are prohibited from speaking and may not ask questions or testify during committee hearings. You may attend a committee hearing seated in the audience or watch via TV 20 or YouTube. Questions you have concerning a committee hearing may be submitted to the Director of Policy and Research.***

Council member Jones, this is yet another attempt to address your inappropriate and unprofessional conduct in the workplace. It is Council's policy to maintain a work environment free from threats, bullying, intimidation and harassment. It is frustrating to all involved that you continue your unacceptable behavior even after the corrective and disciplinary actions taken following the prior investigation. You should know that, but for the fact that you are an elected official, in any other workplace setting you would likely be let go. However, there is nothing, including the fact that you are an elected official, that excuses you for your continued bad behavior. This is an attempt once again to hold you accountable.

Be advised that outside counsel who investigated the incidents recommends bringing a formal censure resolution against you to acknowledge the inappropriateness of your actions and reinforce Council's commitment to workplace safety. We agree with outside counsel's recommendation and intend to introduce a formal censure resolution in September. Members of Council may give feedback to either of us or a member of the leadership team regarding the censure no later than September 12, 2025. We expect that you will take seriously this letter and the corrective actions set forth herein.

  
Blaine A. Griffin, President  
Cleveland City Council

  
Patricia J. Britt, Clerk  
Cleveland City Council

cc: All Members of Council  
All Council staff