



February 28, 2024

Mayor Kelly Girtz  
Athens-Clarke County Unified Government  
301 College Avenue, Suite 300  
Athens, GA 30601

Sheriff John Q. Williams  
Athens-Clarke County  
325 E Washington Street, Suite 125  
Athens, GA 30601

Dear Mayor Girtz and Sheriff Williams:

As you are aware, Laken Riley, a nursing student at Augusta University's Athens campus, was murdered on the University of Georgia's campus while on her morning run on February 22, 2024. She was allegedly killed by Jose Antonio Ibarra, an alien from Venezuela who entered the United States illegally in 2022 and was released by the Biden administration into the interior of our country.

Notwithstanding President Biden's refusal to deport criminal illegal aliens, secure the southern border, finish the wall, and reinstate the "Remain in Mexico" policy, various U.S. states, counties, and cities are aiding and abetting the invasion of our country by declaring themselves "sanctuary" jurisdictions. While Athens-Clarke County has not explicitly designated itself a sanctuary county by ordinance, it is a sanctuary county by word and deed. This claim is backed up by, among other things, the Center for Immigration Studies having Clarke County, alongside DeKalb and Clayton Counties, on its "Sanctuary Cities List."

As you are also aware, the state of Georgia prohibits local governments from acting as sanctuaries for illegal immigrants, but that hasn't stopped county officials from inviting those on the run from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to Athens for protection. In 2019, the Athens-Clarke County Government passed "*A Resolution in Support of Athens Immigrant, Undocumented, and LatinX Community.*" The reader may easily interpret this title alone to refer to illegal immigrants, but the resolution itself states:

"The Athens-Clarke County Unified Government is welcoming to people from all lands and backgrounds and strives to foster a community where individuals and families **of all statuses** feel safe, are able to prosper, and can breathe free."

We wonder if the Commissioners meant this clause to include United States citizens residing in Athens who and are experiencing overcrowding, a growth in the homeless population, increased cost of living, and as evidenced by the death of Ms. Riley, a higher risk of violent crime.

In addition to that resolution, the year prior, in 2018, then-Sheriff Ira Edwards stopped complying with ICE detainers, which are requests that local law enforcement hold an illegal alien in custody for an additional 48 hours to give federal law enforcement time to take that alien into


custody for deportation proceedings. If not a sanctuary jurisdiction, why would the Sheriff do this and risk violating his oath to keep the American citizens of Clarke County safe?

The debate about the morality of sanctuary policies is over, and the American people grow weary of politicians who violate their oaths to support and defend the Constitution and to protect the American people. Right now, Athens-Clarke County is in that category.

The safety and security of American citizens should not be a partisan issue. Students at the University of Georgia and their parents expect all elected leaders to ensure that the campus is safe. Further, the U.S. citizens of Clarke County elected you to prioritize their needs and safety. You must do everything you can to meet those expectations without regard to politics.

We write to request that you immediately and publicly reverse course and do what is right to ensure the safety and security of those who entrusted you to lead.

Sincerely,



Mike Collins  
Member of Congress

Rich	McCormick, MD, MBA	Member of Congress	GA-06
Andrew	Clyde	Member of Congress	GA-09
Marjorie	Taylor Greene	Member of Congress	GA-14
Rick	W. Allen	Member of Congress	GA-12
Earl	L. "Buddy" Carter	Member of Congress	GA-01
Barry	Loudermilk	Member of Congress	GA-11
Drew	Ferguson	Member of Congress	GA-03
Austin	Scott	Member of Congress	GA-08
Chris	Carr	Attorney General	State of Georgia
John	King	Insurance Commissioner	State of Georgia
Bruce	Thompson	Labor Commissioner	State of Georgia
Tyler	Harper	Agriculture Commissioner	State of Georgia
Tim	Echols	Public Service Commissioner	State of Georgia
Tricia	Pridemore	Public Service Commissioner	State of Georgia
Lauren	"Bubba" McDonald	Public Service Commissioner	State of Georgia
Kelly	Loeffler	Fmr. United States Senator	U.S. Senate
John	Kennedy	Senate Pro-Tempore	District 18
Steve	Gooch	Senate Majority Leader	District 51
Jason	Anavitarte	Senate Caucus Chair	District 31
Randy	Robertson	Senate Majority Whip	District 29
Chuck	Hufstetler	State Senator	District 52
Carden	Summers	State Senator	District 13
Frank	Ginn	State Senator	District 47

John	Albers	State Senator	District 56
Greg	Dolezal	State Senator	District 27
Rick	Williams	State Senator	District 25
Larry	Walker	State Senator	District 20
Brian	Strickland	State Senator	District 17
Lee	Anderson	State Senator	District 24
Clint	Dixon	State Senator	District 45
Kay	Kirkpatrick, MD	State Senator	District 32
Bill	Cowsert	State Senator	District 46
Bo	Hatchett	State Senator	District 50
Max	Burns	State Senator	District 23
Matt	Brass	State Senator	District 28
Ben	Watson, M.D.	State Senator	District 1
Shelly	Echols	State Senator	District 49
Blake	Tillery	State Senator	District 19
Marty	Harbin	State Senator	District 16
Russ	Goodman	State Senator	District 81
Sam	Watson	State Senator	District 11
Brandon	Beach	State Senator	District 21
Chuck	Payne	State Senator	District
Jan	Jones	Speaker Pro-Tempore	District 47
James	Burchett	House Majority Whip	District 176
Houston	Gaines	State Representative	District 117
Trey	Rhodes	State Representative	District 124
Beth	Camp	State Representative	District 135
Steven	Sainz	State Representative	District 180
John	Carson	State Representative	District 46
Matthew	Gambill	State Representative	District 15
Rey	Martinez	State Representative	District 111
Holt	Persinger	State Representative	District 119
Lauren	Daniel	State Representative	District 81
Alan	Powell	State Representative	District 33
Rob	Leverett	State Representative	District 123
Marcus	Wiedower	State Representative	District 121
David	Clark	State Representative	District 100
Josh	Bonner	State Representative	District 73
Lauren	McDonald III	State Representative	District 26
Bill	Werkheiser	State Representative	District 157
Donald	L. Parsons	State Representative	District 44
Emory	Dunahoo	State Representative	District 31
Chas	H. Cannon	State Representative	District 172
Tim	Fleming	State Representative	District 114
Steven	Meeks	State Representative	District 178

Brad	Thomas	State Representative	District 21
Clint	Crowe	State Representative	District 118
Steve	Tarvin	State Representative	District 2
Mike	Cameron	State Representative	District 1
Bill	Yearta	State Representative	District 152
Jason	Ridley	State Representative	District 6
Matt	Barton	State Representative	District 5
Leesa	Hagan	State Representative	District 156
Donnie	Pope	Sheriff	Jasper County
Gary	Long	Sheriff	Butts County
Janis	Mangum	Sheriff	Jackson County
Joe	Chapman	Sheriff	Walton County
J.Michael	Moore	Sheriff	Madison County
James	Hale	Sheriff	Oconee County
Jud	Smith	Sheriff	Barrow County
Joel	Robertson	Sheriff (Ret.)	Barrow County

Cc: Patrick Davenport – District 1 Commissioner  
Melissa Link – District 2 Commissioner  
Tiffany Taylor – District 3 Commissioner  
Allison Wright – District 4 Commissioner  
Dexter Fisher – District 5 Commissioner  
Jesse Houle – District 6 Commissioner  
John Culpepper – District 7 Commissioner  
Carol Myers – District 8 Commissioner  
Ovita Thornton – District 9 Commissioner  
Mike Hamby – District 10 Commissioner