

To the Board of Directors of Houston Landing:

We, journalists of the Houston Landing, write to you in confusion and dismay. We are grateful for the leadership and guidance you have provided to our news organization since its founding. For that reason, we respectfully oppose Monday's terminations of Founding Editor in Chief Mizanur Rahman and Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Alex Stuckey. We believe these dismissals will undermine the Landing's mission and negatively affect our workplace.

Rahman and Stuckey's contributions to the Landing have been foundational to our success. That includes impact-driven reporting under Rahman's leadership, such as: [overturning a Texas prisoner's death sentence](#), a federal Title IX complaint challenging [Katy ISD's gender policies](#), and a federal lawsuit [against Liberty County developer Colony Ridge](#) that corroborated the Landing's [in-depth investigation](#). Additionally, Stuckey's investigation spurred a \$645,000 investment from Harris County to [more than double the county jail's competency restoration program](#). Their expertise and reputations were major factors in recruiting much of the Landing's staff.

Thanks in large part to Rahman and Stuckey's mission-driven leadership, the newsroom has surpassed key benchmarks for readership, engagement and growth. We more than doubled our goal of achieving 1 million page views in 2023, while maintaining higher-than-expected engagement time. The Landing's impact tracker, our primary metric for defining success, includes more than 200 entries, twice the number senior leadership had outlined for the year.

Monday's actions blindsided us. Nothing in the Landing's performance, to date, appears to justify terminating two senior, trusted and well-respected members of the newsroom. CEO Peter Bhatia gave us his time this morning to explain his decisions. Unfortunately, we remain baffled why such drastic measures were necessary. We now risk significant damage to employee retention and recruitment. Further, the optics of such a massive restructuring during a moment of forward momentum will hurt our fundraising and financial efforts.

Furthermore, the newsroom is reeling from the decision to cut Maggie Gordon's column, which has repeatedly exceeded editorial benchmarks for success. Additionally, John Tedesco has been named interim editor-in-chief, but we do not know what his role will be when a new editor joins.

We are approaching the Board at this moment in hopes of making the Landing the best possible version of itself. Monday's personnel changes will not further that goal. We hope you will consider the profound trust, respect and admiration this newsroom holds for Rahman and Stuckey. We reiterate: their contributions to the newsroom have been instrumental to our success. Houston deserves a newsroom that includes them both.

As the newsroom tries to find its bearings, we request a response by the end of business Wednesday.

Sincerely,
The Journalists of the Houston Landing

