

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Regular Commission Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 13, 2024 2:00 p.m. Via Microsoft TEAMS & In-Person

Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson
Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox
Lisa Giliberto
Alex Harris
Edith Pestana
Tamara Titre

Commissioners Absent

Andrew Norton
Joseph Suggs

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Director
Jamie Rubin, Regional Manager
Jose Michael Gonzalez, Regional Manager
Jonathan Sykes, HRO Attorney
Robin Trepanier, HRO Attorney
Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney
Courtney Shields, HRO Attorney
Ana Mitchell, Outreach Coordinator
Jo Keogh, HR Investigator
Laura Roxbury, HRO Representative
Evelyn Dillon, HRO Trainee
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary
Aubri Petersen, Legal Secretary
Stephanie Chenard, Secretary
Laura Thurston, Asst. Attorney General

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Managing Director
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Robin Kinstler Fox, HRO Attorney
Gabriela Sandoval, HRO Attorney
Chiedza Rodriguez, HRO Attorney
Darcy Strand, Legislative Advisor
Neva Vigezzi, AA Supervisor, (TWR)
Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Jase Olavarria, HRO Trainee
Travis Fuller, HRO Trainee
Kristen Parker, Executive Secretary
Leigh Russo, Secretary
Stephanie O'Loughlin, Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Commissioner Kapoor welcomed and thanked all for attending. He noted this as the Commission’s first in-person meeting in four years. He acknowledged his fellow Commissioners, and CHRO staff for ensuring the agency’s efficient operations throughout the pandemic. He congratulated Commissioners Titre, Gadkar-Wilcox, and Harris for successfully completing their confirmation hearings before the legislature. He further noted that they, including himself, would be in front of both chambers of the Legislature in the coming weeks, and hoped that all would be able to celebrate confirmations at the next Commission meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Pestana, as acting Secretary for Commissioner Mambruno, entertained a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 14, 2024, Regular Commission Meeting as presented.

To Approve the Minutes of the February 14, 2024, Regular Commission Meeting:

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Harris
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Pestana, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 3 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Norton, Suggs)
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by HRO Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler.

Commissioner Gadkar-Wilcox joined the meeting at 2:12 PM

Department of Housing

Staff representing Department of Housing were Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Deputy Commission Brandon McGee, DOH HR Associate-Equal Employment Opportunity Caesar Valentin, and DOH HR Generalist Victoria Cruse.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: The plan does contain all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94. The agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals and despite these efforts has been unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore, is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 5 out of 10 or 50%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 0 out of 0 or 0%
- Program Goal Achievement 1 out of 1 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2021 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2017 Approved; 2015 Approved; 2014 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for The Department of Housing and to Retain its Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: A. Harris
Second: L. Giliberto
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Norton, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

Department of Correction

Staff representing the Department of Correction were Commissioner Angel Quiros, Deputy Commissioner of Operations and Rehabilitation Services William Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner of Administration Sharonda Carlos, Chief of Staff Ronald Cotta, HR Generalist 3-Staffing Supervisor Debbie Sass, HR Operations Manager John Bishop, Equal Employment Opportunity Director Holly Darin, Equal Employment Opportunity Assistant Kristen Jalbert, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialists Christian Moore, Briana Bratz, Camille Grant, and Judith Garcia.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan contains all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94 inclusive. The agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals and despite these efforts has been unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 193 out of 459 or 42%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 36 out of 64 or 56%
- Program Goal Achievement 0 out of 0 or 0%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2018 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for The Department of Correction and to Retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: E. Mambruno
Second: E. Pestana
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 2 (Norton, Suggs)
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

V. REQUEST TO REOPEN

1. Jason Cassis v. Yale New Haven Hospital
CHRO Case No. 2230005
Presented by HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes

To Disapprove the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case # 223005 – Jason Cassis v. Yale New Haven Hospital

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: S. Gadkar-Wilcox
Discussion: Commissioner Giliberto noted that the Commission did more than enough to try and contact the Complainant via email, telephone, U.S. Postal Service and by certified mail, and the complainant still has not responded or is present for this hearing.

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Pestana, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 2 (Norton, Suggs)
Did not vote – 1 (Kapoor)

2. Aaron Ravenburg v. Russell Bonaccorso, Jaelle Hersey, Michael Morris
CHRO Case No. 2310367, 2310369, 2310371
Dana Ravenburg v. 1st Lt. Catriana Hersey, Jaelle Hersey, Victoria Haskins, Sheldon Hernandez
CHRO Case No. 2310390, 2310391, 2310392, 2310393
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Fox

To Approve the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case No. 2310367, 2310369, 2310371 Aaron Ravenberg v. Russell Bonaccorso, Jaelle Hersey, Michael Morris and CHRO Case No, 2310390, 2310392, 2310393 Dana Ravenberg v. 1st Lt. Catriana Hersey, Jaelle Hersey, Victoria Haskins, Sheldon Hernandez

Motion: A. Harris
Second: S. Gadkar-Wilcox
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Pestana, Titre)
No: 1 (Mambruno)
Abstain: 0
Absent: 2 (Norton, Suggs)
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

Commissioner Mambruno left the meeting at 3:26 PM.

3. Andrew Beamon v. TD Bank
CHRO Case No. 2330535
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Trepanier

To Approve the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case No. 2330535- Andrew Beamon v. TD Bank

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: S. Gadkar-Wilcox
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 3 (Mambruno, Norton, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

VI. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Director Hughes took a moment to thank the CHRO staff who organized and ensured the meeting ran as smoothly as possible, particularly Darian Pitts, Spencer Hill, and Kristen Parker.

She noted she attended the recent confirmation hearings and congratulated Commissioners Harris, Gadkar-Wilcox, Titre, and Kapoor on their testimony at their hearings. She noted how happy she was to have them as part of the Commission and hopes they will be onboard for years to come. She also acknowledged Commissioner Pestana for her 20+ years of service. She further reported that recruitment activities are ongoing as resignations and retirements continue. Work continues with the CHRO's partners DOL, OPM, and the Office of the Governor on the Disparity Study. The BITS Team is providing assistance with a number of projects as it applies to the phone and other upgrades in the Bridgeport and Norwich offices.

She acknowledged Kimberly Jacobsen for her work with the Uniformity Committee, making certain that all the agency's policies and procedures are up to date. She informed that CHRO will be holding a virtual event on April 25 (details to follow), regular meetings are taking place with the CTRP3 Racial Profiling Prohibition Project and the Policy Subcommittee, which she chairs, a Women's History Month event is scheduled for March 22, an Equity Fair is scheduled for May 1 to be held at the State Armory, and Kid's Court Academy continues to offer robust programming. She encouraged and invited the Commissioners to join these sessions by reaching out to Kristen Parker. She went on to note that the Production Report reflects the relatively high numbers of case filings and robust settlement figures.

Outreach Report

Deputy Director Sharp provided details on the Women’s History event on March 22 from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM featuring six dynamic women panelists who will speak on how they have inspired change in Connecticut. She encouraged everyone to attend. A celebration is planned to acknowledge Asian Pacific Islander Appreciation Month, and an Equity Fair is planned for May 1 from 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM, to be held at the State Armory, is the agency’s opportunity to show the community that they are a vital aspect of the work done by the CHRO. All of the executive branch agencies will have a table at the Fair. The Kids Court Academy continues to flourish as more and more students are registering to participate. She also encouraged the Commissioners to join and facilitate. She also congratulated the regions as they are diligently working on meeting the EEOC contract, and their community outreach goals. She reported that the DEI Committee continues to have a large presence on social media and distributes a great deal of content related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. She added that she will be facilitating a training with the Connecticut Bar Association on new Neurodivergent attorneys, the issues they face, and the protections the CHRO offers. She also acknowledged Ana Mitchell for increasing the CHRO’s presence in the Latino community.

Legislative Update

Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Attorney Darcy Strand informed that the Bill Tracking Sheet that was included in the meeting materials will be updated to reflect 10 additional bills have been added. She reported that testimony has been submitted on a good number of the bills included in the report. However, there are two big bills that are currently being worked on that weren’t originally on the CHRO’s radar: artificial intelligence, and algorithm discrimination. She further informed that both the final versions of the Equity and Diversity Studies are on track to be finished and released widely in the very near future.

Legal Update

Managing Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen informed the Commissioners about a retaliation case filed on behalf of a child who was denied treatment at a medical facility. It was determined that this facility refused to treat the child, resulting in the family being awarded \$7,500 in emotional distress damages.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be both in-person at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

To Adjourn:

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: L. Giliberto
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Pestana, Titre)
No: 0

Abstain: 0
Absent: 3 (Mambruno, Norton, Suggs)
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

Chair Kapoor adjourned the meeting at 4:03 PM.

The Minutes of the Regular Commission meeting dated March 13, 2024, were approved on April 10, 2024.

Prepared by:



Tanya A. Hughes
Executive Director