

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Regular Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 8, 2025  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Microsoft TEAMS

### Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson  
Edward Mambruno, Secretary  
Lisa Giliberto  
Alex Harris  
Andrew Norton  
Edith Pestana  
Joseph Suggs

### Commissioners Absent

Tamara Titre

### Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director	Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director	Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Attorney	Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison	Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager
Gary Madison, Human Rights Representative	Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary	

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Nicholas Kapoor called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

#### **II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Commissioner Kapoor informed a quorum had been achieved with 7 out of 8 Commissioners present. He wished all a Happy New Year and thanked everyone for attending.

#### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Secretary Mambruno asked for a motion to approve the 2024-12-11 Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

#### **To Approve the 2024-12-11 Commission Meeting Minutes:**

Motion: E. Pestana

Seconded: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0  
Abstain: 0  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED**

Presented by Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp.

**Office of the Secretary of State**

Staff representing the Office of the Secretary of State were Secretary of State, Stephanie Thomas, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer/HR Director, Emily Kennedy.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) 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 has substantially addressed deficiencies noted by the Commission in the prior plan review.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 3 out of 8 or 37.5%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 0 out of 2 or 0%
- Program Goal Achievement: 0 out of 2 or 0%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Disapproved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Disapproved; 2019 Approved; 2018 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for The Office of the Secretary of State and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: E. Mambruno  
Second: J. Suggs

**Vote:**

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Western Connecticut State University**

Staff representing the Western Connecticut State University were President, Dr. Manohar Singh, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, Jennifer Labate, Director of Equity & Civil rights-CT State Community College, Nicholas D'Agostino, Chief Human Resources Officer, Fred Cratty.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) 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 prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 10 out of 42 or 24%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 4 out of 11 or 36%
- Program Goal Achievement: 0 out of 1 or 0%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Disapproved; 2022 Approved, 2021 Approved; 2020 Conditionally Approved; 2019 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for Western Connecticut State University and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: E. Pestana

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection**

Staff representing the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection were Commissioner, Ronnell Higgins, Deputy Commissioner, Brenda Bergeron, Deputy Commissioner, Colonel Dan Loughman, Chief of Staff & Special Counsel, Nicole Lake, Counsel to the Commissioner, Sarah Karwan, State Police Sergeant-Recruitment & Selections, Troy Biggs, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, Curtis Eller, Human Resources Specialist-EEO, Ashley Burke, Human Resources Specialist-EEO, Alexis Cortes, Human Resources Business Partner 2, Ryan Howe.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) 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 prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 28 out of 77 or 36%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 6 out of 15 or 40%
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved, 2022 Approved, 2021 Approved, 2020 Approved, 2019 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and to retain its Annual Filing Status**

Motion: A. Harris  
Second: J. Suggs

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried**

**Department of Banking**

Staff representing the Department of Banking were Commissioner Jorge L. Perez, Statewide Program Manager-EEO DAS, Jennifer Taplin, Human Resources Generalist 3, Belinda Rivera.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) 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 prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 3 out of 10 or 30%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 6 out of 8 or 75%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2017 Approved; 2015 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Banking and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: E. Mambruno

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Department of Public Health**

Staff representing the Department of Public Health were Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Deputy Commissioner Adelita Orefice, Deputy Commissioner Lisa Morrissey, Equal Employment Opportunity Manager/Officer Amanda Anduaga-Roberson.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) 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 has substantially addressed deficiencies noted by the Commission in prior plan reviews.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 34 out of 68 or 68%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 31 out of 46 or 67%
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved, 2022 Approved, 2021 Approved, 2020 Approved, 2019 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Public Health and to retain its Annual Filing Status**

Motion: A. Harris

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried**

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business to discuss.

**VI. DIVISION REPORTS**

**Executive Director's Report**

Director Hughes introduced the new Program Director, Johnette Tolliver and noted she comes to the agency with a wealth of Human Resources and Affirmative Action experience that will be very beneficial to the agency.

She went on to report that the agency is in the midst reevaluating recruitment efforts due to budget levels being extremely low and under review. Staffing levels will continue to be monitored.

Director Hughes took a moment to acknowledge and thank Darcy Strand, Spencer Hill, and the entire legislative team for their efforts finalizing the disparity study. She reported that the telework process has been updated, staff presence in the offices has increased, and how beneficial the move to increase uniformity and consistency in case monitoring has been. She further reported and acknowledged the great job Deputy Director Sharp has done with the Writers Workshop, and the plan to tailor the presentations for all units.

She concluded by reporting she recently executed the EEOC contract for 1469 cases totaling \$1,222,695.00, noted the slight uptick in the number of cases contracted for this current year, and that contract dollar amount totals included funds for training, intake, and joint outreach activities, directly deposited in the state's General Fund.

**Outreach Report**

Deputy Director Sharp reported on the press conference she attended at the Governor's office where the new Chief Equity and Opportunity Officer, Mariana Monteiro, was introduced. She added that she and Ms. Monteiro have been in contact and are working closely with the MLK Commission to bring the bell ringing ceremony honoring Dr. King to fruition on January 20. They are also working together to bring attention to how civil rights connects us all and is the reason to have a kinship of equality, equity, and fairness.

She informed this year's Children's MLK March commemorates its fifth anniversary. It will be held on Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at St. Peter's Church in Cheshire and starts at 12:00 PM. She added there are efforts to involve more youth agencies, and dignitaries such as Johanna Hayes, Geraldo Reyes, Governor Lamont and Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz have been invited to participate. She also encouraged the Commissioners to come out and enjoy the festivities.

She noted there would be an Affirmative Action training held on January 29 for all State Agency Commissioners. The purpose is to provide technical assistance to all who file AA Plans. Affirmative Action staff, Johnette Tolliver, Jase Olivera, and Gary Madison will facilitate the training. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, the agency will be partnering with the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Commission at the Cheshire Public Library. The Cheshire Chief of Police and the Chief State's Attorney will be guest speakers. She further noted KCA is scheduled to restart at the end of February. A trip to the White House and Echo Park is planned for the participants. The plan is to hold civil rights chats by the fireside. The office of Gender Equity in DC will also join the group.

She went on to report there is a lot of outreach activity happening throughout the agency with staff in the regions and main office pushing information out to the public about CHRO. She further reported that Sreenidi Bala, a previous KCA student and most recent intern had been nominated and received a full scholarship to the college/university of her choice. She concluded by entreating everyone to review the written Outreach Report for additional updates.

### **Legislative Update**

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand informed the Legislative session began today. All the newly elected Senators and Representatives were sworn in, to include former Commissioner Gadkar-Wilcox. The Governor is also slated to give his state of the state address at 12:00 noon offering policy thoughts for the session ahead of his February Budget address. More specifics will be offered when the Budget is released.

She further informed that she and Attorney Michelle Dumas-Keuler met with the Chairs of the Housing Committee to discuss the collateral consequences as it applies to the Housing Bill slated to help people as they come out of incarceration find housing. Additional discussion was held with Growing Together Connecticut on zoning issues and the need for affordable housing.

She, Director Hughes, and Deputy Director Sharp will meet with Senator Bob Duff to discuss the Disparity Study and the Civil Rights Museum. In the next few weeks, she will be meeting with the Judiciary Chairs about the Bill proposal for the museum.

She went on to update the group about the Disparity Study starting with a brief recap of its' beginning, noting that it took months to find and gather all the data for the 400-page

document. She acknowledged Spencer Hill for his help with reviewing all the drafts and making sure everything is legally accurate. The final version and the Introduction will be forwarded to the Connecticut General Assembly as the official release by the end of the week. Work is still being done on the language that should be introduced in the legislature to implement the recommendations of the report.

Attorney Spencer Hill continued and outlined the three main recommendations noted in the Introduction/Summary. He noted that the study was created to address whether there are disparities in Connecticut contracting. Disparities were found in every industry that was analyzed. The CHRO's Contract Compliance Unit focuses primarily on construction contracts, but this study used analysis from 7 different industries and disparities were found in all of them, for all groups, other than white owned businesses. As a result of finding these disparities legislation will be proposed.

**Legal Update**

There was no Legal Update.

**VII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**To Adjourn:**

Motion: A. Norton

Second: J. Suggs

Discussion: None

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:53 PM.

The Minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting dated January 8, 2025 were approved on February 19, 2025.

Prepared by:

  
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Sanya A. Hughes  
Executive Director