

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
2:00 p.m.

Via Microsoft TEAMS and In-Person (450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford – Hearing Room B)

Commissioners Present

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

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director	Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director	Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director	Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison
Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager	Jody Walker-Smith, HRO Attorney
Robin Trepanier, HRO Attorney	Robin Fox, HRO Attorney
Renee Vandenwallbake, HRO Attorney	Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary	Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary
Laura Thurston, Assistant Attorney General	

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commissioner Kapoor welcomed everyone to "Spring." He thanked all for attending, noted the room microphones were sensitive, the meeting was a public one, and the recording of the meeting will be available to all.

****Commissioner Harris momentarily left the meeting at 2:10 PM.****

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Secretary Mambruno requested a motion to approve the 2025-02-19 Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve the 2025-02-19 Commission Meeting Minutes:

Motion: E. Pestana

Seconded: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 4 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 1 (Mambruno)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

III. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp.

Department of Corrections

Staff representing the Department of Correction were Acting Commissioner William Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner Sharonda Carlos, Equal Employment Opportunity Director Holly Darin, Human Resources Generalist 3 Debbie Sass, EEO Assistant Kristen Jalbert, EEO Specialist 2 Christian Moore, EEO Specialist 2 Camille Grant, EEO Specialist 2 Judith Garcia, and EEO Specialist 2 Briana Bratz.

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, 46a-68-102(b)(4) OR the agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore, is in compliance with (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 209 out of 509 or 41%
- Promotional Goal Achievement 49 out of 79 or 62%
- 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 Corrections and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Department of Developmental Services

Staff representing the Department of Developmental Services were Commissioner Jordan Scheff, Manager, EEO, Edward Magnano.

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, 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals and despite these efforts has been unable to do, 46a-68-102(b)(4), 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: 107 out of 211 or 51%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 26 out of 45 or 58%
- Program Goal Achievement: -- out of -- or --%

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 Developmental Services and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: E. Mambruno
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

**Commissioner Titre joined the meeting at 2:20 PM. **

Connecticut Insurance Department

Staff representing the Connecticut Insurance Department were Commissioner Andrew Mais, Deputy Commissioner Jared Kosky, Human Resources Generalist 2 Victoria Cruse, and Human Resources Associate-EEO Jessica Henowitz.

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, inclusive, and 46a-68-102(b)(3) the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals despite these efforts has been unable to do so, 46a-68-102(b)(4) 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: 7 out of 14 or 50%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 or 100%
- Program Goal Achievement: -- out of -- or --%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2022 Approved, 2021 Approved, 2020 Disapproved, 2018 Approved; 2016 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for Connecticut Insurance Department and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

IV. REQUEST TO REOPEN

In the case(s) below, Commission Counsel, Respondent or their representative, and Complainant or their representative were provided five minutes to provide opening remarks. Questions and answers from commissioners followed these remarks.

1. Alice Diaz v. City of Middletown
CHRO Case No. 2330244
Presented by HRO Attorney Jody Walker-Smith

To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case no. 2330244 Alice Diaz v. City of Middletown:

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

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

2. Andrew Lipsiner and Sandra J. Schofield v. Pleasant View Farms Development, Inc. et al
CHRO Case No. 2450088
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Kinstler Fox

To Deny the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case # 2450088 – Andrew Lipsiner and Sandra J. Schofield v. Pleasant View Farms Development, Inc. et al

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

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

****Commissioner Harris rejoined the meeting at 3:05 PM.****

****Commissioner Suggs left the meeting at 3:06 PM****

3. Charlotte Street v. Yale New Haven Hospital
CHRO Case No. 2430471
Presented by HRO Attorney Renee Vanden Wall Bake

To Grant the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case # 2430471 – Charlotte Street v. Yale New Haven Hospital

Motion: A. Norton
Second: E. Pestana
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 4 (Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana)
No: 2 (Harris, Titre)
Abstain: 0
Absent: 1 (Suggs)
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

This requires a two-thirds vote of Commissioners present and voting; Staff and guests invited to attend must be noted.

1. CHRO ex.rel Amy Pinkerton v. Solomon Vegh-Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550011
Presented by HRO Attorney Jody Walker-Smith
2. CHRO ex.rel Dazauna Smith v. Wisdom NH, LLC and Ocean Management, LLC
CHRO Case No. 350122
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Trepanier

Chair Kapoor entertained a Motion to Enter into Executive Session and Invite Director Tanya Hughes, Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp, Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen, Attorney Spencer Hill (for technical assistance), Attorney Jody Walker-Smith, and Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston.

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

Vote:

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

The motion carried. Executive Session began at 3:49 PM.

Commissioners Kapoor, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, and Titre returned after Executive Session at 4:08 PM.

VI. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS

1. CHRO ex.rel Amy Pinkerton v. Solomon Vegh-Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550011
Presented by HRO Attorney Jody Walker-Smith

To File CHRO ex.rel Amy Pinkerton v. Solomon Vegh-Housing Election Case No. 2550011 in the New Britain Judicial District and Seek Injunctive Relief, Punitive Damages, and Civil Penalty:

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

Vote:

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

2. CHRO ex.rel Dazauna Smith v. Wisdom NH, LLC and Ocean Management, LLC
CHRO Case No. 350122
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Trepanier

To File CHRO ex.rel Dazauna Smith v. Wisdom NH, LLC and Ocean Management, LLC Case No. 350122 in the New Haven Judicial District and Seek Injunctive Relief, Punitive Damages, and Civil Penalty:

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

Vote:

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

VII. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Director Hughes briefly reported on agency activity over the last two months. She noted an op-ed published in the CT Mirror written by two CHRO attorneys, Spencer Hill and Jody Walker-Smith, that confirms the agency's commitment to vigorously enforce the state's anti-discrimination laws.

She further reported that the agency received a letter from OPM indicating there would be a hiring *stoppage* and asked all agencies to significantly cut back on expenses. She added that the CHRO was initially told that there would be a \$500,000 holdback but has since been notified that the holdback is \$900,000. Plans are being made to contest this issue. Director Hughes emphasized that an agency the size of the CHRO should not be subjected to such an imbalance.

She reported that CHRO is working closely with the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities who plans to send complaints to the CHRO that traditionally were being sent to federal partners. She further reported that the contracts with both, HUD and EEOC are complete for fiscal year 2024. However, neither of the contracts have been forwarded for 2025, but are anticipated.

She stated that the agency is also working closely with Analyst Maria Cruz from OPM to identify areas of savings and that we are working with the legislature and the Office of the Governor to make certain that the positions allotted are funded.

She concluded that the launch of the Disparity Study and the Civil Rights Unites Tour are underway with meetings and presentations being held across the state and virtually. She reported that Deputy Director Sharp testified at the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, discussed work that's being done with CTRP3, and how hard the CHRO's staff is working to minimize aged inventory. All unit heads have provided information on how they are managing their aged inventory.

Outreach Report

Deputy Director Sharp informed that the agency has initiated the Civil Rights Unites initiative and the message is being spread throughout the state. She announced the Legislative Breakfast, planned for March 19 at the state Capitol. She extended the invite to all Commissioners and informed about the Disparity Study would roll out. She added that on April 10 there would be a Civil Rights Unites event in Bridgeport at the Saturn Library, an event held in Norwich on April 16 at Otis Library and in Waterbury on Tuesday, April 22. She noted that she and Outreach Coordinator, Ana Mitchell and Program Director, Johnette Tolliver will be conducting a presentation for the Democratic Town Committee in Cheshire.

She further informed that trainings are taking place throughout the state with respect to the protected classes and questions are being asked regarding what happening nationally with the layoffs of federal employees, who happen to be disproportionately black and brown people. Inquiries have increased as a result. A budget expansion requesting additional positions for intake has been submitted.

Finally, she also reported on the positive momentum that Senate Bill 1203 regarding the Civil Rights Museum is getting. A meeting is scheduled with Senator Patricia Billie- Miller, who chairs the Bond commission and sponsored a bond bill for the museum. Deputy Director Sharp discussed the location for the museum and possible partnership with the Artist Collective in Hartford to share their space to house the museum.

Legislative Update

Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Darcy Strand reported that the Disparity Study has been rolling out over the last few weeks. She further discussed that there will be presentation of the Disparity study at the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus the night of the meeting with other presentations and opportunities to discuss the study with Griffin and Strong, who

conducted the study and go over the CHRO's implementation plans. She also referenced her Bill Tracking list specifically noting Bill1442 for the Disparity Study.

Legal Update

There were no cases to present at the meeting.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

To Adjourn:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Harris

Discussion: None

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Suggs)

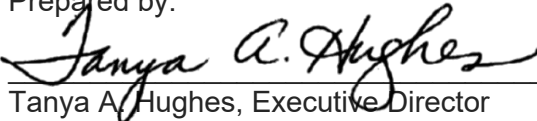
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned 4:36 PM.

The Minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting Dated March 12, 2025, were approved on April 9, 2025.

Prepared by:


Tanya A. Hughes, Executive Director