

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

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

Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson
Lisa Giliberto
Alex Harris
Andrew Norton
Edith Pestana
Tamara Titre

Commissioners Absent

Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Joseph Suggs

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director	Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director	Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager
Timothy Lewendon, HRO Attorney	Margaret Nurse-Goodison, HRO Attorney
Jerald Lentini, HRO Attorney	Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney
Jonathan Sykes, HRO Attorney	Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison
Ana Mitchell, Outreach Coordinator	Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary	Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary
Laura Thurston Assistant Attorney General	

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the October 8, 2025, meeting at 2:03 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Chair Kapoor noted a quorum had been established with Commissioners Giliberto, Titre, Harris, Pestana and himself present. He noted that Commissioners Norton, Suggs, and Mambruno were presently absent.

Chair Kapoor reminded everyone that the meeting is held in public forum and will be posted as such. He also noted that he and several other Commissioners needed to leave the meeting by 4:00 PM and wished all a happy fall.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Kapoor asked Commissioner Giliberto to act as Secretary since Commissioner Mambruno was not in attendance. Commissioner Giliberto asked for a motion to approve the September 10, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve the 2025-09-10 Commission Meeting Minutes:

Motion: T. Titre
Seconded: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 4 (Giliberto, Harris, Kapoor, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 1 (Pestana)

Absent: 3 (Mambruno, Norton, Suggs)

Did not vote: 0

The motion carried.

Commissioner Norton joined the meeting at 2:05 PM

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler

Eastern Connecticut State University

Staff representing Eastern Connecticut State University were President Dr. Karim Ismaili, Vice President for Equity and Diversity Dr. LaMar Coleman, and Director of Institutional Research/Human Resources Manager Jianguo Zhu.

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 and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 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: 14 out of 36 possible goals were met or 39%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 13 out of 20 possible goals were met or 65%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved.

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

Motion: A. Norton

Second: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs))

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

V. **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. David Emmett McCarthy v. Gateway Community College and CT Board of Regents
CHRO Case Nos. 2530441 & 25300442
Presented by HRO Attorney Timothy Lewenden

Prior to the motion and voting there was a good amount of discussion surrounding the timing of the complainant's dismissal, his right to have a withdrawal exit interview because the complainant missed the 30-day window to do so, and the retaliation claim. As a result, the decision was made to take the retaliation piece back to the investigation stage.

To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2530441 in relation to the disability claim due to it being time barred and move to reopen the retaliation claim CHRO Case No. 25300442 David Emmett McCarthy v. Gateway Community College and CT Board of Regents.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs))

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

2. Kwasi Appiah-Adjei v. CVS Pharmacy, Inc.
CHRO Case No. 2430218
Presented by HRO Attorney Margaret Nurse-Goodison

To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2430218 Kwasi Appiah-Adjei v. CVS Pharmacy, Inc.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

3. Alicia Manson v. Epic Personnel Partners, LLC.
CHRO Case No. 2410259
Presented by HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes

To Grant the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2410259 Alicia Manson v. Epic Personnel Partners, LLC.

Motion: A. Norton
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

VII. 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. Roxana Aquilar v. Elizabeth J. & John Robert Nuzzo-Proposed Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550077
Presented by HRO Attorney Jerald Lentini
2. CHRO ex rel. Paul Norton v. Housing Authority of the Town of Plymouth-Proposed Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550154
Presented by HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones

To enter Executive Session and to invite into Executive Session: Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston, Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen, HRO Attorney Jerald Lentini, and HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones.

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

The Commissioners and invitees entered Executive Session at 3:22 PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission meeting and resumed public session at 3:44 PM and noted that no votes were taken by the Commission in Executive Session.

VIII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS

1. CHRO ex rel. Roxana Aquilar v. Elizabeth J. & John Robert Nuzzo-Proposed Housing Election

CHRO Case No. 2550077

Presented by HRO Attorney Jerald Lentini

To file CHRO ex rel. Roxana Aquilar v. Elizabeth J. & John Robert Nuzzo-Proposed Housing Election CHRO Case No. 2550077 at the appropriate Superior Court in the New Haven Judicial District.

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

2. CHRO ex rel. Paul Norton v. The Housing Authority of the Town of Plymouth-Proposed Housing Election

To have the Commission Authorize the Legal Division to Instigate an Action Against the Housing Authority of the Town of Plymouth pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 46a-89b seeking equitable and other appropriate relief for CHRO ex rel. Paul Norton v. The Housing Authority of the Town of Plymouth-Proposed Housing Election CHRO Case No. 2550154 and file at the Superior Court in New Britain.

Motion: A. Harris

Second: E. Pestana

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

IX. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Director Hughes stated that the Commissioners should have received a copy of the CHRO's Annual Report. She noted that it has been filed on the website and includes links to other agency report vehicles. She added all the statutorily required reports are included and also filed.

She informed that the agency is still in limbo as it applies to federal contracts. Information is coming through that could present a challenge to the agency's ability to voucher for some of the

complaints that have already been completed. The agency has completed/succeeded the anticipated EEOC contract and should be able to voucher for those once EEOC reopens. The desire is to voucher for the entire contract. She added that information is coming through indicating that going beyond what is covered by the national government may not result in the agency receiving credit for the case closures.

She further informed that discussions continue regarding the requested budget adjustment and expansion request. The agency is also seeking to resume its independence through a joint request from both DOL and CHRO. A meeting has been scheduled for this upcoming Friday.

She concluded that the agency has received its draft audit indicating seven findings to address. Responses have been provided with agreement on some and disagreement on others especially as it applies to staffing issues and the lack of budget to correct the issues. These are items, she added, that are beyond the agency's control, but corrective measures are being worked on.

Outreach Report

Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler reported that a Youth Summit is taking place on November 1, 2025. It will be held at UConn Law School on Elizabeth Street in Hartford.

She added that Kids Court Academy continues but will end at the end of the month. Discussions will be taking place centered on communities' alliance over the housing bill. She added that there may be a special legislative session to discuss the housing bill.

She noted that CHRO staff participated in the Harvard Pride event and the Hartford Puerto Rican Day parade. She further noted that the "Food and a Film" series continues, staff participation in the Veteran Stand Down in Rocky Hill and various locations, Fair Housing Training sessions, and the training she and Attorney Spencer Hill did during the CADEP conference held on Friday, September 26.

Legislative Update

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand reiterated the information regarding the Housing bill. She then reported that the Growing Together Connecticut Coalition will be having a virtual event on October 9 and invited all interested parties to attend. The discussion will center on the vetoed 5002 Bill. She added that a special legislative session will take place, hopefully by the end of the month that will tackle both the housing issue and some issues regarding immigration. She promised to keep everyone informed about the special session.

She further informed that the CHRO is preparing for the upcoming legislative session by reviewing the concepts from the 2025 Legislative session that did not pass, as well as any new proposals to form the 2026 legislative package. She and other members of the Legislative Committee are working to have the proposal language written so that Executive Director Hughes, Deputy Director Sharp and the Committee can make a final decision on the package for the upcoming session.

Legal Update

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen reported on two favorable appellate decisions. Both cases were litigated by HRO Attorney Gregory Jones. The first case involved an employment discrimination claim alleging a hostile work environment and termination based on race. The CHRO investigator found no reasonable cause and dismissed the case. On April 21, 2025, the complainant sought an appeal. A complainant has 45 days to appeal. In this case the

complainant attempted to appeal way past the 45-day window. A motion to dismiss was filed by the agency and was granted by the court.

The second case was a housing discrimination case involving a request for reasonable accommodation for parking space. A full investigation was done with the investigator finding no reasonable cause. The plaintiff asked for reconsideration, which was also denied. It was found that there was sufficient evidence in the record to support a no reasonable cause finding. The appeal was dismissed.

X. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kapoor asked for a motion to adjourn

To Adjourn:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Mambruno, Suggs)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 3:54 PM.