

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, November 12, 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  
Tamara Titre

## Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director  
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director  
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager  
Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney  
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney  
Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison  
Gary Madison, HRO Representative  
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

Cheryl Sharp, Executive Deputy Director  
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director  
Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager  
Gregory Jones, HRO Attorney  
Jody Walker-Smith, HRO Attorney  
Ana Mitchell, Outreach Coordinator  
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary  
Laura Thurston Assistant Attorney General

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

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the November 12, 2025, meeting at 2:01 PM.

### **II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

Chair Kapoor welcomed everyone and noted a quorum had been established with 7 Commissioners present. He added that a full contingent of 8 Commissioners, with his inclusion, were ready to conduct business.

Chair Kapoor took a moment to congratulate CHRO staff, KCA student participants, and parents that attended and participation in the November 1 Youth Summit Day that was held at UConn Law School. He specifically acknowledged Commissioner Giliberto and CHRO staff member Kellye Hudson for their participation in the event. He added that it was an incredible day.

Chair Kapoor also acknowledged HRO Attorney Jerald Lentini for being re-elected last Tuesday to the Manchester Board of Directors. In conclusion he asked everyone, except the Commissioners, to mute their microphones and remain off camera until recognized. He also reminded everyone that the meeting is held in public forum and will be posted as such.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Secretary Mambruno asked for a motion to approve the October 8, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

**To Approve the 2025-10-08 Commission Meeting Minutes:**

Motion: J. Suggs

Seconded: T. Titre

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

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

Presented by Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp

**Department of Administrative Services**

Staff representing Department of Administrative Services were Commissioner Michelle H. Gilman, Deputy Commissioner/Chief Human Resources Officer Nicholas Hermes, Human Resources Administrator/EEO Alicia Nunez.

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: 19 out of 35 possible goals were met or 54%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 17 out of 40 possible goals were met or 43%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met or 100%

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

\*\*Commissioner Titre recused herself from participating in the review and discussion of both the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Labor.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for Department of Administrative Services and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: A. Norton

Second: E. Pestana

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Recused: 1 (Titre)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Department of Labor**

Staff representing Department of Labor were Commissioner Dante Bartolomeo, and EEO Specialist II Jeri Beckford.

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 has substantially addressed deficiencies noted by the Commission in prior plan reviews.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 10 out of 32 possible goals were met or 31%
  - Promotional Goal Achievement: 8 out of 26 possible goals were met or 31%
- There were no Program Goals set.

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

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

Motion: J. Suggs

Second: E. Mambruno

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Recused: 1 (Titre)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Metropolitan District Commission**

Staff representing Metropolitan District Commission were Chief Executive Officer Scott Jellison, EEO Representative Rita Kelley, and Human Resources Director Jamie Harlow.

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: 10 out of 29 possible goals were met or 34%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 2 out of 5 possible goals were met or 40%
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 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 the Metropolitan District Commission and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: E. Mambruno

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Southern Connecticut State University**

Staff representing Southern Connecticut State University were Interim President Dr. Sandra Bulmer, Associate Vice President for Institutional Inclusive Strategies and Change Management Dr. Kevin Rutledge, and Director of Diversity and Equity Programs Paula Rice.

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: 25 out of 59 possible goals were met or 42%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 20 out of 33 possible goals were met or 61%
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 possible goals were met or 100%

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

\*\*Commissioner Harris recused himself from participating in the review and discussion of Southern Connecticut State University Affirmative Action Plan Summary.

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

Motion: E. Norton  
Second: J. Suggs

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Recused: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Workers Compensation Commission**

Staff representing Workers Compensation Commission were Chairman Stephen Morelli, Legislative and Administrative Advisor Marie Gallo-Hall, Statewide Program Manager Terri Miro, Human Resources Generalist 2 Bonnie Schlechtweg, Human Resources Associate/EEO Shaun Simoneau.

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: 4 out of 14 possible goals were met or 28.6%
- Promotional Goal Achievement was not met with 0 out of 2 possible goals or 0%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met 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 Workers’ Compensation Commission and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:**

Motion: E. Norton  
Second: L. Giliberto

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

Chair Kapoor thanked all the agencies for appearing before the Commission and noted that five out of five agency heads were present for the reviews of their respective Affirmative Action Plans.

Prior to the discussion and vote on the Contract Compliance Exemption Request Chair Kapoor asked that the record show that Commissioners were in receipt of a letter dated November 4 2025, from Executive Director Tanya Hughes acknowledging the request.

**V. CONTRACT COMPLIANCE EXEMPTION REQUEST**

**1. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities**

Presented by HRO Attorney Spencer Hill

Attorney Hill informed that the request is being submitted on behalf of the Connecticut State Community College for a proposed contract with Advanced Technology International. Under the agreement Connecticut State Community College develops, delivers and provides detailed curriculum for training courses for workers involved in the submarine ship building supply chain. Due to clauses in the agreement, including the non-discrimination clause required under the Connecticut state statutes, the Connecticut State Community College is asking for an exemption

for the contract to omit the provision. A review of the materials submitted supports the basis for exemption. Attorney Hill recommended that the exemption be granted. He further explained that they are still bound by discrimination law and it does not exempt them from or permit them to discriminate.

**To Approve the Contract Compliance Exemption Request from Connecticut State Community College:**

Motion: E. Pestana  
Second: L. Giliberto

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**VI. 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. Heather Morrison v. Grace Baptist Church  
CHRO Case No. 2410346  
Presented by HRO Attorney Gregory Jones

**To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2410346 Heather Morrison v. Grace Baptist Church:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: A. Harris

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

2. Jason Shola Akande v. CT Division of Criminal Justice  
CHRO Case No. 2510316  
Presented by HRO Attorney Jody Walker-Smith

\*\*\*Commissioner Giliberto recused herself from participating in the review and discussion of Jason Shola Akande v. CT Division of Criminal Justice. CHRO Case no. 2510316. \*\*\*

**To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2510316 Jason Shola Akande v. CT Division of Criminal Justice:**

Motion: A. Norton

Second: E. Mambruno

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Recuse: 1 (Giliberto)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. 2026 Commission Meeting Calendar

Chair Kapoor recommend that the November 2026 meeting is moved to the fourth Wednesday of the month, November 18. The two choices being considered were November 4, 2026, and November 18, 2026. (The second Wednesday, November 12, 2026, is Veterans' Day). Choosing the latter date of November 18 will prevent the Commission from running into complications with any potential deadlines that could occur with the Affirmative Action Plans.

Second, he proposed amending the forum to hold all the meetings via TEAMS, eliminating the two in-person meetings, and possibly planning a summer outing/training that brings everyone together. He added that "special" and/or "emergency" meetings can be added if/when necessary. He also instructed forwarding the 2026 Commission Meeting calendar to the Secretary of State's office.

**To Adopt the 2026 Commission Meeting Calendar as Amended and Authorize the Executive Director's Office to forward it to the Secretary of State's Office:**

Motion: E. Mambruno

Second: A. Harris

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**VIII. 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. Joselyn Diaz v. August Lenhart & Ridgeview Hills, Inc. – Proposed Housing Election  
CHRO Case No. 2550174  
Presented by HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones

**To enter and to invite into Executive Session: Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Executive Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp, Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen, and HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones:**

Chair Kapoor noted that Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston needed to leave the meeting and no replacement had been identified.

Motion: E. Pestana  
Second: L. Giliberto

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

The Commissioners and invites entered Executive Session at 3:45PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission meeting and resumed public session at 3:57 PM and noted that no votes were taken by the Commission in Executive Session.

**IX. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS**

1. CHRO ex rel. Joselyn Diaz v. August Lenhart & Ridgeview Hills, Inc. Proposed Housing Election  
CHRO Case No. 2550174  
Presented by HRO Attorney Casandra Bretones

**To file CHRO ex rel. Joselyn Diaz v. August Lenhart & Ridgeview Hills, Inc - Proposed Housing Election CHRO Case No. 2550174 at the New Britain Judicial District and seek injunctive Relief, Punitive Damages and a Civil Penalty.**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: E. Mambruno

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**DIVISION REPORTS**

**Executive Director's Report**

Director Hughes noted that the agency has been busy despite the government shutdown and continues to forge along with case processing. She added that, although the agency has not been able to completely execute the federal contracts, we exceeded expected case closures towards contract goals. The agency has received notice of some restrictions on the type of cases that will be allowed under federal contracts.

She informed that the agency has held meetings and requested meetings with the Office of the Attorney General to discuss memos that have come out of the Federal Government offices and have been responding to legislative requests for information on how the CHRO has been impacted by the Federal Government shutdown.

She further informed that discussions continue with the financial team at DOL. They have confirmed that the agency is able to meet all its financial obligations through fiscal year 2027 and continue with its recruitment efforts.

She noted the Production Report, specifically as it applies to the high intake levels and strong closure rates, especially in the West Central Region. She further noted OPH's case levels being very manageable, pending Memorandums of Understandings with DOL/DAS regarding business management needs that the Legal Directors are working on, the recruitment efforts, the continued implementation Disparity Study activities, automation efforts as it applies to translation and accessibility requirements and compliance as it applies to the agency's online presence.

In conclusion she informed the Commissioners about the agency wide meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 4 to be held at the Artists Collective. She also thanked the Commissioners for their participation in the Youth Summit held at UConn and invited them to join in the MLK, Jr. Children's March scheduled for Monday, January 19, 2026.

### **Outreach Report**

Executive Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp reiterated the success of the Youth Summit at UConn. She added that a good amount of traction has been attained because of the successful event. Plans are being formulated to make the Youth Summit a yearly event.

She informed about an addition to the KCA curriculum. The KCA Honor Roll will recognize those participants making both honors and high honors and encourage inroads into achieving academic excellence and championing social justice and civil rights.

She noted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual MLK, Jr Children's March and invited everyone to participate. Plans are in place to reach out to all the Divine 9 Fraternities and Sororities, regional universities, elementary, middle, and high school students to participate in the event. She also invited all Commissioners to participate.

She went on to report on the planned agency wide meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 4. She also asked for Commissioner participation on a panel to discuss the role they play as Commissioners for the agency. She informed that they would be contacted regarding their availability.

She then took a moment to highlight two exciting events that the agency/staff are participating in; an international campaign related to immigration, national origin, and ancestry. Ana and Michael Mitchell represented the agency at an event on Ellis Island at the Statue of Liberty. The other event will highlight the role that CHRO, as the oldest governmental civil rights agency in the nation, has played in the civil rights movement. Interviews are forthcoming.

### **Legislative Update**

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand informed that there was a special session occurring at the Legislature. The Housing Bill is pending debate, but it is likely not going to be a bipartisan vote. She added that the Attorney General's civil rights statues were being discussed and to clarify what will be allowed under those statues. The other bills being worked on are related to immigration issues and funding related to the Federal Government shut down.

She further informed that CHRO Legislative Committee is reviewing the concepts from the 2025 legislative session that did not pass and new proposals for the 2026 legislative package. She

added that she is working on proposal language to be submitted to the Executive Director and Executive Deputy Director for final decision for the upcoming session.

**Legal Update**

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen reported on a case where a final decision was reached. The case was Rose v. Hartford Lodging, LLC. Ms. Rose filed an affidavit of legal discrimination against her employer, The Red Roof Inn, alleging that she was discriminated against and harassed because of her protected class status being transgender. There were also allegations made about pay differential and other terms and conditions as it applied to her. After a full hearing the referee found in her favor on one of the allegations the respondent had discriminated against her as it applied to the hours she was allowed to work, finding that she was given less hours than the other employees resulting in a difference in pay. Favor was not found regarding the other allegations of harassment. The Claimant was awarded \$5000 in emotional distress, \$1008 in back pay, prejudgment and trust of \$926, and post judgement in trust if the judgement isn't paid out. There were other orders made, in terms of cease and desist, an order of no retaliation, nondiscriminatory work environment and to ensure that discriminatory notices and posters were on display at the respondent's place of business.

**X. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Chair Kapoor announced the next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, December 10, 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: E. Mambruno

Second: A. Harris

**Vote:**

Yes: 7 (Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried**

The meeting adjourned at 4:22 PM.