

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 14, 2026  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Microsoft TEAMS

## Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson  
Lisa Giliberto  
Andrew Norton  
Edith Pestana  
Joseph Suggs  
Tamara Titre

## Commissioners Absent

Edward Mambruno, Secretary  
Alex Harris

## Staff Present

Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director  
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager  
Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney  
Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager  
Gary Madison, HRO Representative

Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director  
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney  
Timothy Lewendon, HRO Attorney  
Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison  
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

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

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the January 14, 2026, meeting at 2:03 PM.

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

Chair Kapoor welcomed and wished everyone a very happy new year and noted that a quorum had been established with six out of eight Commissioners present. He noted that Commissioners Harris and Mambruno were absent.

He also reminded everyone that the meeting is held in public forum, will be posted as such, to please mute their microphones, and to keep their cameras turned off until recognized.

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

Chair Kapoor appointed Commissioner Giliberto to act as Secretary for the meeting. Commissioner Giliberto asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes as drafted. Seeing none she then asked for a motion to accept the December 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes as written.

### **To Approve the December 10, 2025, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes:**

Motion: E. Pestana  
Second: T. Titre

### **Vote:**

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

No: 0  
Abstain: 0  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)  
**The motion carried.**

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

Presented by Managing Legal Director Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler

**Department of Public Health**

Staff representing Department of Public Health were Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Deputy Commissioner Lisa Morrissey, Deputy Commissioner Adelita Orefice, and EEO Manager Mario Garcia.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a) the plan contains 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: 44 out of 59 possible goals were met or 75%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 11 out of 24 possible goals were met or 46%
- 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 Department of Public Health and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: E. Pestana

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Office of Policy and Management**

Staff representing the Office of Policy and Management were Secretary Joshua Wojcik, Chief Administrative Officer Yvonne Addo, and Human Resources Generalist 3 Carolyn Kozak.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains 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: 11 out of 21 possible goals were met or 52%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met or 100%
- Program Goals Achievement: 2 out of 2 possible goals were 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 Office of Policy and Management and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:**

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: J. Suggs

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**Office of the Secretary of the State**

Staff representing the Office of the Secretary of State were Secretary of State Stephany Thomas, EEO/Director of Human Resources Emily Kennedy.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains 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: 3 out of 6 possible goals were met or 100%
- There were no Promotional Goals set.
- 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 Disapproved; 2019 Approved.

**To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Office of the Secretary of the State and to move them to Biennial Filing Status from Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: A. Norton

Second: J. Suggs

**Vote:**

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

No: 0  
Abstain: 0  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)  
**The motion carried.**

**Western Connecticut State University**

Staff representing Western Connecticut State University were President Jesse M. Bernal, Chief Diversity, Education & Inclusion Officer/Title IX Coordinator Jennifer Labate, J.D., Chief Human Resources Officer Fred Cratty.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains 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: 16 out of 37 possible goals were met or 43%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 7 out of 12 possible goals were met or 58%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 possible goals were met or 100%

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

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

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: J. Suggs

**Vote:**

Yes:5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)  
No: 0  
Abstain: 0  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)  
**The motion carried.**

**Department Of Emergency Services and Public Protection**

Staff representing Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection were Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, Attorney, Human Resources Officer Sarah Karwan, Attorney Gwaina Wauldon, Sergeant Tawny Lanati, Human Resources Specialist-EEO Alexis Cortes, Human Resources Specialist-EEO Ashley Burke, DAS HR Business Partner Catherine Downey.

This plan was recommended for conditional approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains 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: 26 out of 109 possible goals were met or 24%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 3 out of 12 possible goals were met or 25%
- 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.

**To Reject Staff Recommendation that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Affirmative Action Plan is given Conditional Approval and instead change it to full Approval and to retain its Annual Filing Status:**

Motion: A. Norton

Second: T. Titre

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**V. REQUEST TO REOPEN**

1. Shamia Warner v. US Renal Dialysis  
CHRO Case No. 2530452  
Presented by HRO Attorney Timothy Lewendon

**To Reopen CHRO case number 2530452, Shamia Warner v. US Renal Dialysis for Purposes of Returning the case to CAR (Case Assessment Review):**

Motion: E. Pestana

Second: T. Titre

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**VI. 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 Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. - Housing Election  
CHRO Case nos. 2440355 & 2440356  
Presented by HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones
2. Robert Berriault v. CHRO et al  
Presented by Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston

Prior to going into Executive Session Chair Kapoor informed that a separate motion needed to be on record noting that Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston was unable to attend the meeting, unable to hand the case to another Assistant Attorney General, and called for a motion.

**To Postpone Discussion and Potential Dispensation of Robert Berriault v. CHRO et al to the February 11, 2026, Commission meeting:**

Motion: J. Suggs  
Second: L. Giliberto

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**To enter Executive Session and to invite into the Executive Session the following individuals: Managing Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, and Attorney Cassandra Bretones:**

Motion: E. Pestana  
Second: T. Titre

**Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

The Executive Session began at 3:20 PM.

Commissioners Kapoor, Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs and Titre returned after Executive Session at 3:30 PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission Meeting to public session and noted that no actions or votes were taken during the Executive Session.

**VII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS**

1. CHRO ex. rel Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. – Housing Election  
CHRO Case Nos. 2440355 & 2440356

**To file the cases CHRO ex. rel Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. - Housing Election in the**

**Wyndham Judicial District and seek conjunctive relief, punitive damages, and a civil penalty:**

Motion: L. Giliberto  
Second: T. Titre  
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)  
No: 0  
Abstain: (0)  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**VIII. DIVISION REPORTS**

**Executive Director's Report**

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen reporting on behalf of Executive Director Hughes offered some highlights from her status report and noted that the agency continues to meet with various state agencies to include Labor, EEO, HR, OLR, OAG, BITS, and DOC. There have also been several meetings with Senator Osten to discuss issues occurring within the Department of Corrections.

She added that recruitment efforts are on-going with interviews being held to fill clerical, investigative, HRO Trainee, and attorney positions. Progress continues with implementing the disparity study recommendations. Payment for the entire EEOC contract has been received and deposited. The agency is still waiting to reconnect with HUD and continues to pursue a completed contract from FY 25; however, plans are in the works to hold a fair housing event in April.

Director Jacobsen further reported that monthly manager meetings, agency training courses, and quarterly staff meetings continue. In conclusion she informed that the agency continues to work on its legislative agenda and that the Annual Children's March would take place on Monday, January 19, 2026.

**Outreach Report**

Outreach Coordinator Ana Mitchell, reporting on behalf of Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp, informed that CHRO has started including the 2025 Community Highlights on its Facebook page to give the community an opportunity to see where/what towns the agency has held its outreach events.

She went on to thank staff for their participation in the agency-wide event held on December 4, 2025. She acknowledged EEOC, CEA (Community Engagement Ambassadors), EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and CHRO Commissioners, Alex Harris, Lisa Giliberto, and Edith Pestana for their presentations during the Retreat.

She further reported on the agency's participation in a national press conference in partnership with Joe Young of the Can-Do movement that was promoting "Kemet: One Nation, Many Journeys" an Immigration Public Service Announcement. She, Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp and Executive Storekeeper Michael Mitchell all participated in the PSA. She also noted

the group's participation in a Press Conference held at City Hall honoring National Human Rights Day that also promoted the public service announcement from Can-Do.

Outreach Coordinator Mitchell concluded by reporting the agency's participation in the Analeh Television Production's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Toy Drive and the Annual MLK Children's March scheduled for January 19, 2026.

### **Legislative Update**

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand reported that work continues on the Disparity Study Recommendations. The group continues its work on new procedures, guidelines, and plans to do outreach to the stakeholders. The Office of Policy and Management has been meeting with impacted agencies, including CHRO, regarding the launch of the contractor database that's required under the 2025 bill. Attorneys Spencer Hill and Jonathan Sykes are also working on new contract compliance regulations.

She further reported that the Bond Commission had allotted about \$500,000 to be used to obtain some new software for the Affirmative Action platform.

Darcy concluded and informed that the new legislative session starts the first week of February. The agency's Legislative Committee has been reviewing legislation that impacts the CHRO in preparation for the 2026 Legislative Session.

### **Legal Update**

There were no new cases to report on from the Legal Department.

## **IX. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Chair Kapoor announced the next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Kapoor asked for a motion to adjourn

### **To Adjourn:**

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Norton

### **Vote:**

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

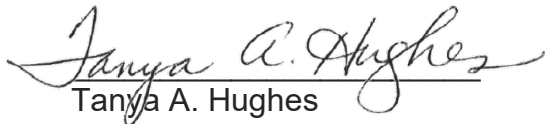
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

### **The motion carried**

The meeting adjourned at 3:43 PM.

The minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting dated January 14, 2026, were approved on February 11, 2026.

Prepared by:

  
Tanya A. Hughes  
Executive Director