

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 11, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

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

Commissioners Absent

Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Alex Harris
Edith Pestana

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Chiedza Rodriguez, HRO Attorney
Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary
Tanya DeMattia, Assistant Attorney General

Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Gregory Jones, HRO Attorney
Jody Walker-Smith, HRO Attorney
Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the February 11, 2026, meeting at 2:04 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Chair Kapoor welcomed everyone and reminded the group that the meeting is held in a public forum and will be posted as such. He noted that a quorum had been established with four out of eight Commissioners present, and added that he, Commissioners Giliberto, Norton, and Titre were present with the expectation that Commissioner Suggs would also join later. Commissioners Harris, Mambruno, and Pestana were absent.

He informed that this meeting would be his last as he was resigning from the Commission effective Friday, February 13, 2026. He offered his gratitude for the mentorships, friendships, and the opportunities that came with being a member of the Commission for the past 8 ½ years and Chair for the last 2 1/2. He concluded with an acknowledgement and thanks to Executive Director Hughes and Deputy Executive Director Sharp for their dedicated work and special team of employees they built to promote the services of the CHRO.

Prior to approving the January 14, 2026, Commission Meeting Minutes, Commissioners Norton, Giliberto, and Titre offered their appreciation and thanks to Chair Kapoor for his dedicated service to the Commission. Executive Director Hughes also acknowledged and thanked Chair Kapoor for his sincere commitment and dedication to the agency.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

In the absence of Secretary Mambruno Chair Kapoor called for a motion to approve the January 14, 2026, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve the January 14, 2026, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 3 (Giliberto, Norton, 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

Central Connecticut State University

Staff representing Central Connecticut State University were President Zulma Toro, University Counsel & VP of Regulatory Affairs Stacy Votto, and Director of Regulatory Affairs Rebecca Cannon-Klemenz.

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: 22 out of 45 possible goals were met or 49%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 11 out of 23 possible goals were met or 48%
- 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 Central Connecticut State University and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: E. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 3 (Giliberto, Norton, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

Staff representing the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection were Commissioner Katies Dykes, Chief of Staff Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Legal, Planning, and Regulatory Affairs Annie Decker, Human Resources Business Partner Sofia Bonilla, and Human Resources Generalist 2 Katya Hunt.

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: 23 out of 56 possible goals were met or 41%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 16 out of 27 possible goals were met or 59%
- Program Goals 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 Suggs joined the meeting at 2:21 PM

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton

Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

V. CONTRACT COMPLIANCE REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION

1. Exemption for Travelers Indemnity Company
Presented by HRO Attorney Spencer Hill

Attorney Hill informed that this is a new request and not a renewal as indicated by the agenda. He explained that the request is for an exemption from certain contract compliance requirements on behalf of the Office of the State Comptroller for a proposed contract with Travelers

Indemnity Company. Under this agreement Travelers will administer healthcare services and benefits administration. He added that Travelers requested an exemption from statute requirements including but not limited to the non-discrimination contract language requirements.

He further explained that the contract falls within the exemptions permitted by regulations, as the contract value is less than \$10,000.00. Specifically, he added, the contract has a value of zero dollars because the contract is to provide payroll deduction slots for voluntary supplemental benefits for state employees. Which means the state does not pay any money to the contractor for this service, instead the funds will be deducted from state employee paychecks and then transmitted to the contractor. He concluded by recommending approval of the request.

Prior to the vote, Commissioners Giliberto and Norton questioned the length of the contract and asked why the recommendation is for a partial exemption and not a full one? Attorney Hill deferred to the attorney representing Travelers, Lara Manzione, who explained that the contract is for three years with two possible one-year extensions and is the reason the value is zero dollars. She added that this particular contract is within a category of supplemental benefits that are considered optional for state employees. These employees can obtain auto or home insurance through Travelers via payroll deduction.

To Grant the Exemption Request for Travelers Indemnity Company as Outlined in the January 30, 2026, Letter from the Executive Director:

Motion: J. Suggs
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Prior to the review of the reopening Chair Kapoor indicated that going forward all reopening requests that come before the Commission with a recommendation to reopen should state the statute and quote the language from said statute that the Commission's Council's used to recommend the reopening.

VI. REQUESTS TO REOPEN

1. Christopher Pressley-Dickerson v. Amazon
CHRO Case No. 2630139
Presented by HRO Attorney Gregory Jones

To Deny the Request to Reopen Christopher Pressley-Dickerson v. Amazon, CHRO Case No. 2630139 Based on the Fact that there's no Actual Complaint Before the Commission to Consider:

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: T. Titre

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

2. Taveon Walker v. Fernandez Trucking, LLC
CHRO Case No. 2530765
Presented by HRO Attorney Renee Vanden Wall Bake

To Deny the Reopening of Taveon Walker v. Fernandez Trucking, LLC, CHRO Case No. 2530765:

Motion: A. Norton

Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Prior to entertaining a motion to go into Executive Session, Chair Kapoor made two announcements. The first was to inform that Assistant Attorney General Tanya DeMattia would attend in place of Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston, who was unable to attend the meeting. He further informed that the second item to be heard during Executive Session had to do with agency personnel, thus, Attorneys Rodriguez and Walker-Smith would have to leave the session prior to the discussion of the personnel item.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

1. Susan E. Virgilio v. Woodridge Lake Property Owners' Association, Inc. - Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550169
Presented by HRO Attorneys Chiedza Rodriguez and Jody Walker-Smith
2. Robert Berriault v. CHRO et al
Presented by Assistant Attorney General Tanya DeMattia

To enter Executive Session and invite into the Executive Session the following individuals: Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Legal Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, Attorney Chiedza Rodriguez, Attorney Jody Walker-Smith, and Assistant Attorney General Tanya DeMattia for Executive Session item number one; Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Legal Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, and Assistant Attorney General Tanya DeMattia for Executive Session item two:

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: J. Suggs
Discussion: None

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

The Executive Session began at 3:05 PM.

Commissioners Kapoor, Giliberto, Norton, Suggs and Titre returned after Executive Session at 3:34 PM.

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

VIII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS

1. Susan E. Virgilio v. Woodridge Lake Property Owner's Association, Inc. – Housing Election
CHRO Case No. 2550169

To file the case Susan E. Virgilio v. Woodridge Lake Property Owner's Association, Inc., in the Litchfield Judicial District and seek junctive relief, punitive damages, and a civil penalty:

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: J. Suggs
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 3 (Giliberto, Suggs, Titre)

No: 1 (Norton)

Abstain: (0)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

IX. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hughes took a moment to thank Chair Kapoor for his steadfast commitment to the agency and for always running efficient meetings during his time with the Commission. She noted that he would be missed and wished him well in his next chapter.

Director Hughes went on to report that on-going meetings with various state departments, including a meeting scheduled with Union and Management for February 23. She noted that the Legislature was in session, the agency's budget meeting is scheduled for February 13, and the agency's legislative committee has been meeting regularly in preparation for the sessions.

She further reported on the high intake levels throughout the agency, as evidenced by the production report, the continued recruitment efforts, and thanked Michelle Dumas Keuler, Kimberly Jacobsen and Johnette Tolliver for their efforts, resulting in the hiring of two secretaries, one for the Legal Department and the other for the Capitol Region. She added that the agency is also looking to fill 3 additional positions to become independent and less reliant upon the Department of Labor. One position is for an EEO person and other positions will be to oversee the agency's budget and fiscal needs.

Director Hughes added that efforts are being made to ensure that the funding allocated for the disparity implementation project is properly allocated. The agency has submitted the EEOC 2027 Request For Information (RFI), but the agency is still awaiting receipt of the completed contract. Information from HUD remains outstanding as the agency is still waiting for the completed contract for FY 2025.

Outreach Report

Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler reported on behalf of Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp, informing that there were 125 people at the Fair Housing Training. She reported that Kids Court Academy would start next week with a focus on criminal justice. Plans are being formulated to hold a student symposium in the spring, a Fair Housing Conference in April, and other outreach events in conjunction with the Greater Hartford Realtors Association.

She added that interviews for both Executive and Legal Interns are underway. The interns will take part in all the agency's outreach efforts. In conclusion she entreated the group to review the written Outreach Report.

Legislative Update

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand reported that the agency's budget hearing would take place on February 13. She added that the agency's position is good due to its budget expansions already being included in the governor's budget. This will allow the agency to create its internal business office and have extra funds for translation services.

She further reported that she held conversations with some of the legislators and met with the Judiciary and Housing Chairs. She added that it's very clear that the legislators are narrowing their scope of work due to this being a short legislative session. The warning has gone out that controversial topics will not be entertained.

Liaison Strand also reported that work is being done to fix some of the anticipated disparity study recommendations as it applies to the new procedures and guidelines. She and Attorney Spencer Hill have been working on this.

Legal Update

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen wished Chair Kapoor well. She reported on three cases involving the CHRO. The first case concerned a black female custodian who had been working in her position since 2011. In 2020 a new head custodian was hired who was not happy with her job performance. This resulted in her being disciplined for her performance in various ways. The Union grieved the penalties and the arbitrator that made the decision on the case found that the penalties that she endured were some of the worst he had ever seen. As a result, he reduced some of the penalties she incurred. The claimant then filed a case for retaliation, sex, and gender discrimination. As a result, she was awarded \$225.32 in back pay,

and her attorney was awarded \$68,000 in attorney fees. She was not awarded any emotional distress damages, but was awarded reimbursement of transcripts, fees, and various cease and desist orders.

The second case was a Superior Court appeal against CHRO for a no reasonable cause in a housing case. The claimant failed to properly file his appeal and neglected to serve the agency. As a result, the CHRO filed a motion to dismiss and the judge agreed, resulting in a win for the CHRO.

The third case was an Office of Public Hearings decision. This case concerned an inmate who complained that the respondent retaliated against him for his opposition to discriminatory practices, and denied him services because of a learning disability, physical disability, and mental disability. The referee found that the claimant had not been excluded from any services or programs based on his disabilities. As a result, the case was dismissed.

X. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

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

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kapoor requested a motion to adjourn.

To Adjourn:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 3:57 PM.