

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Lisa Giliberto
Alex Harris
Andrew Norton
Edith Pestana
Tamara Titre

Commissioners Absent

Joseph Suggs

Staff Present

Tanya A. Hughes, Executive Director
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager
Ana Mitchell, Outreach Coordinator
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

Cheryl A. Sharp, Deputy Executive Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director
Robin Trepanier, HRO Attorney
Elizabeth Moyses, HRO Attorney
Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary
Laura Thurston, Assistant Attorney General

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began with Commissioner Lisa Giliberto instructing everyone that the meeting was being recorded, the recording had started, and she advised everyone, except the Commissioners, to remain off camera until acknowledged.

She then asked Secretary Mambruno to call the meeting to order.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Secretary Mambruno called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. by seeking a motion to approve the 2026-04-08 Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve April 8, 2026, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes as Written:

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: T. Titre

Secretary Mambruno asked if there was any discussion. There was no additional discussion.

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 1 (Norton)

Did not vote: 1 (Mambruno)

The motion carried.

Secretary Mambruno offered a motion to elect Commissioner Giliberto as Acting Chair. Commissioner Pestana seconded the motion.

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)

The motion carried.

III. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Acting Chair Giliberto, stated that she didn't have anything to report and noted that a quorum had been established with 5 voting Commissioners present.

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp

Connecticut State Community College

Staff representing Connecticut State Community College were President Dr. Christina Royal, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff and President Margaret Van Cott, Interim Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dr. Arnita Walls, Director of Equity and Civil Rights Nicholas D'Agostino, Senior Investigator/ADA Coordinator Luciano Manstrangeli, ECR Analyst/Assistant Kailey Baker, and Investigator Kenneth Callahan.

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: 53 out of 106 possible goals were met or 50%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 29 out of 58 possible goals were met or 50%
- Program Goal Achievement: 4 out of 4 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2018 Approved; 2016 Approved.

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

Motion: A. Harris
Second: E. Mambruno

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)

The motion carried.

Department of Consumer Protection

Staff representing the Department of Consumer Protection were Commissioner Bryan Cafferelli, Deputy Jeff Marvin, Deputy Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Executive Assistant Kyle Thaxton, and HR EEO McKenzie Gauthier.

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: 18 out of 31 possible goals were met or 58%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 1 out of 2 possible goals were met or 50%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2018 Approved; 2016 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Consumer Protection and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton
Second: E. Mambruno

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)

The motion carried.

The Department of Social Services

Staff representing the Department of Social Services were Deputy Commissioner Peter Hadler, Chief of Staff Astread Ferron-Poole, EEO Manager Anthony Spence, and EEO Assistant Kelly Papale.

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: 47 out of 114 possible goals were met or 41%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 30 out of 55 possible goals were met or 55%
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2025 Approved; 2024 Approved; 2023Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved.

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

Motion: E. Mambruno

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)

The motion carried.

V. CONTRACT COMPLIANCE REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION

1. Renewal of the Municipal Paving Exemption

Presented by HRO Attorney Spencer Hill

Attorney Hill reported on a request for the renewal of the Municipal Paving Exemption. He further explained that the CHRO is required by Connecticut Statutes to ensure compliance with the State's Contract Compliance Set Aside Program. In 2015, the requirements of this program were extended to state-funded public works projects administered by municipalities. Due to the frequency and nature contracts for street paving, a limited exemption for these contracts was put in place by the Commission that must be periodically renewed.

Last year, new legislation was enacted that overhauled the contract compliance program statutes. As part of the discussions around new legislation, making the municipal paving exemption permanent through statute. Ultimately, legislators and contractors requested that the Commission continue its current practice of annually renewing the limited paving exemption as opposed to making exemption permanent.

The current exemption requires contracts utilizing the exemption to be entered into on or before June 30, 2026. Commission staff recommend renewing the municipal street paving exemption for a period of one year.

To Approve the Renewal of the Municipal Paving Exemption for One Year:

Motion: E. Mambruno
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

VI. REQUESTS TO REOPEN

1. Brian Davis v. South Kent School
CHRO Case No. 2430351
Presented by HRO Attorney Elizabeth Moyse

To Approve the Reopening of Brian Davis v. South Kent School, CHRO Case No. 2430351:

Motion: A. Norton
Second: A. Harris

Vote:

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

2. Debra King v. Waterbury Hospital
CHRO Case no. 2530804
Presented by HRO Attorney Robin Trepanier

To Deny the Reopening Request of Debra King v. Waterbury Hospital, CHRO Case No. 2530804:

Motion: A. Norton
Second: A. Harris

Vote:

Yes: 4 (Harris, Norton, Pestana, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 1 (Mambruno)
Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)
The motion carried.

VII. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hughes reported on meetings between the CHRO and various state departments with plans to transition CHRO into an independent entity no longer coupled with the Department of Labor. A meeting was scheduled for the following day with the Secretary of OPM to finalize the details of removing the agency's dependency on the Department of Labor, emphasizing that the Department of Administrative Services will continue to provide Human Resources and Information Technology needs.

She stated that Senator Gordon contacted the agency regarding the CHRO's Audit Report and the subsequent article that was released. A very detailed response was compiled and forwarded, via email, to the Senator. She also asked her secretary to forward the response information sent to the Senator to the Commissioners for their review.

She noted that high case intake levels continue to be seen across the agency. As a result, the agency is exploring how to equitably manage caseloads, inventory, and equalize the distribution of cases. The goal is to prevent overwhelming any one unit/department/region.

Director Hughes further informed that the agency's recruiting efforts have seen an influx of new hires and reminded everyone that they would be introduced during today's meeting.

State Program Manager, Johnette Tolliver, noted that the new hires started April 17 and May 1. She introduced each new hire and noted the departments/regions where they worked. Everyone welcomed them. Director Hughes also informed that the new hires had been introduced to agency leadership during a newly established "meet and greet" session.

She then reported that the agency's Legislative efforts continue, absent Darcy Strand, former Legislative Liaison Officer who left the agency in good standing with the bill tracking system and paved the way for other members of the Legislative Committee to assume responsibility moving forward. Meetings slated to be held over the summer have been set up with some of the Legislators, and work has begun on the Legislative Agenda.

Director Hughes reported that the voucher for the HUD contract was submitted, accepted, and the agency should be receiving a deposit of \$326,873.20. The EEOC contract has been signed, and acknowledgement as received.

Outreach Report

Deputy Executive Director Sharp reported that education, outreach, and training events continue with presentations throughout the state. As of the last Legislative Session funding has been granted for the Civil Rights Museum. The agency is still waiting for a Bond Commission meeting to occur with hope that the promised funding can be released. August will feature an agency event at the Stowe House in Hartford that showcases some of the artifacts from the Connecticut Civil Rights Movement and CHRO's participation as pioneers in the field.

Programming for youth continues via Kids Court Academy. One component of the program is the essay contest. All the required essays were received by May 1. This year's competition will be held at the Legislative Office Building on June 4th. Representation will be sought from the commissioners to serve as judges. She added that this year is KCA's 30th anniversary. Plans are coming together to honor the co-creator of the concept, as well as have her serve as a judge.

Deputy Executive Director Sharp further stated that two of the social justice students-initiated programs that incorporate the CHRO's participation. She noted the agency's participation in a book drive created by the Works Foundation. All the participants received social justice books. The creators of the Foundation also did a presentation on the importance of social justice. She happily acknowledged the fact that KCA is making an impact on the next generation of social justice champions.

Deputy Executive Director Sharp also mentioned that she and Executive Director Hughes will be interviewed the following Friday for a national magazine, and the fact that they are garnering national attention as pioneers in the Connecticut civil rights movement. She reminded everyone about the agency-wide meeting occurring on June 25 where each unit/department/region will present information on the agency's processes and invited all commissioners to attend.

In conclusion, she noted the agency's internship program consisting of more than 20 students from all corners of the state will be instrumental in preparing the next generation of leaders and champions of social justice.

Legal Update

Managing Legal Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen reported on several cases that were past the appeal period. The first case concerned the parent of a hockey player who claimed that the Hockey Association discriminated against her based on a group text message. The Commission denied her reopening, the complainant appealed, and the court rendered the decision that a person could not appeal the Commission decision on a request for reopening.

The next case came out of the Office of Public Hearings as a housing discrimination case. The Complainant filed an appeal alleging that she was denied reasonable accommodation because she had a dog listed on her application when she applied for housing and was placed on a waiting list. Subsequently the dog passed away, she informed the landlord and was allowed to move into the apartment. In March of 2023, based on her medical provider's recommendation she requested that she be allowed to have a service/emotional support animal. Permission was given by the landlord who initially expressed concern about having a dog on the premises. The landlord was told that his concerns were not valid and that a reasonable accommodation needed to be granted. The accommodation was granted, but the landlord made an addendum to the lease, with conditions for keeping the support animal, including a \$50 fee. It was found that imposing a fee for a service animal is illegal. The fee was removed and the complainant was allowed to keep her service animal.

The third case concerned a court appeal from a no reasonable cause case. The complainant claims she was being hassled and discriminated against based on her mental disability and retaliation for filing a previous case. The investigator found no cause; the complainant filed for Recon. It was also denied as a no cause. The complainant argued that the Commission failed to provide a fair and just investigation. However, the Complainant never offered an explanation regarding what the CHRO did wrong. The court found that there was substantial evidence to support the investigator's factual findings.

The final case concerns a complainant who filed a case with CHRO alleging that she had section 8. When the rent increased beyond what section 8 allowed, she applied for assistance through a program called Unite CC to assist with the rental increase. The landlord refused to fill out the necessary paperwork which prevented the complainant from getting the assistance

needed to cover the rental increase. The Complainant, along with her two disabled children, were evicted with the landlord claiming the property was being sold. There was no evidence confirming the selling of the property. Instead, the unit was renovated and re-rented. The CHRO investigator found reasonable cause and the case was certified to public hearing. Judgement was rendered in favor of the complainant. The landlord appealed, but the appeal was dismissed.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Acting Chair Giliberto announced the next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Giliberto asked for a motion to adjourn

To Adjourn:

Motion: A. Harris

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Giliberto)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.