

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



**Regular Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 9, 2024  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Microsoft TEAMS & In-Person**

## **Commissioners Present**

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson  
Edward Mambruno, Secretary  
Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox  
Alex Harris  
Andrew Norton  
Edith Pestana  
Tamara Titre

## **Commissioners Absent**

Lisa Giliberto  
Joseph Suggs

## **Staff Present**

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director  
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Director  
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager  
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney  
Stephanie O'Loughlin, HRO Attorney  
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary  
Kristina Caruso, Secretary

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director  
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director  
Elizabeth Moyse, HRO Attorney  
Courtney Shields, HRO Attorney  
Gregory Jones, HRO Attorney  
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary

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

Chair Nicholas Kapoor called the meeting to order at 2:14 PM. He noted the meeting was taking place in Room 1A of the Legislative Office Building and via TEAMS.

### **II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Commissioner Kapoor reported that a quorum had been achieved with 7 out of 9 Commissioners present. He also noted that Commissioners Giliberto and Suggs were not in attendance.

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

Secretary Mambruno asked for a motion to move approval of the 2024-09-11 Minutes to the 2024-11-13 Commission Meeting.

**To Postpone Approval of the 2024-09-11 Minutes to the 2024-11-13 Commission Meeting:**

Motion: E. Mambruno  
Second: E. Pestana

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

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

Presented by Managing Legal Director Michelle Dumas Keuler for Director Cheryl Sharp

Prior to the discussion on the Affirmative Action Plan, Executive Director Hughes informed that Deputy Director Sharp was on her way to the White House accompanying one of the KCA scholars, Sreenidi Bala, by invitation from First Lady Jill Biden. Sreenidi was one of thirty young ladies accepted nationwide selected to receive the honor of the 2024 Girls Leading Change Cohort.

**Eastern Connecticut State University**

Staff representing the Eastern Connecticut State University were President Karim Ismaili, Vice President for Equity and Diversity LeMar 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. The agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals and despite these efforts has been unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in 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 40 or 45%
- Promotional Goal Achievement 11 out of 15 or 73%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2019 Approved.

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

Motion: E. Mambruno

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

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. Ronnie Leon Smith v. Bob's Discount Furniture, LLC  
CHRO Case No. 2440202  
Presented by HRO Attorney Stephanie O'Loughlin

**To Approve the Request to Reopen CHRO Case no. 2440202 Ronnie Leon Smith v. Bob's Discount Furniture:**

Motion: A. Harris  
Second: E. Pestana  
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Titre)  
No: 0  
Abstain:0  
Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

2. Teresa Borelli v. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System  
CHRO Case No. 2430106  
Presented by HRO Attorney Elizabeth Moyse

**To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case no. 2430106 Teresa Borelli v. Connecticut Technical Education and Career System**

Motion: A. Harris  
Second: E. Mambruno  
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, 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. Karmyn Jackson v. Hsu Wen Chun  
CHRO Case No. 2450108  
Presented by HRO Attorney Gregory Jones

Chair Kapoor entertained a motion to enter Executive Session.

**To enter Executive Session and to invite into Executive Session the following individuals: Executive Director Hughes, Deputy Director Sharp, Managing Attorney Dumas Keuler, Managing Attorney Jacobsen, HRO Attorney Gregory Jones, and for potential technical assistance, HRO Attorney Spencer Hill.**

Motion: S. Gadkar-Wilcox  
Second: T. Titre  
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The Motion to enter Executive Session carried with two-thirds in the affirmative and Executive Session began at 2:47 PM.**

Commissioners Kapoor, Gadkar-Wilcox, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, and Titre returned after Executive Session at 2:55 PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities into public session.

**VII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS**

1. CHRO ex rel. Karmyn Jackson v. Hsu Wen Chun  
CHRO Case No. 2450108  
Presented by HRO Attorney Gregory Jones

**To file CHRO ex rel. Karmyn Jackson v. Hsu Wen Chun, CHRO Case No. 2450108 in the Judicial District of Bridgeport and to seek injunctive relief, punitive damages and a civil penalty.**

Motion: A. Harris  
Second: E. Mambruno  
Discussion: None

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**IX. DIVISION REPORTS**

**Executive Director's Report**

Director Hughes directed attention to the September 2024 Production Report, her monthly agency-wide Status Report, and a recently submitted budget option request. She informed that the CHRO continues to meet with the Department of Labor, Office of Policy Management, Office of the Governor, the EEO designee, Human Resources, Office of the

Attorney General, and BITS. Progress has been made with the plan to file Affirmative Action Plans electronically. The commissioners will be copied on the filing upon submission.

Director Hughes further reported that interviews were conducted and completed for the Southwest Regional Manager's position, her work on the Task Force to Continue the Study of Comprehensive Needs of Children, and the agency-wide meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 29 at Killam's Point in Branford. She noted that Commissioner Pestana would be a panelist at the event, acknowledged the Commissioners for their engagement with the agency, and invited all to attend.

She went on to note that requests have been made to management at 450 Columbus to increase the space for the CHRO offices to accommodate additional staff, the progress made with the creation of an agency-wide events calendar and noted that the Commissioners should be able to access the calendar via their state issued email addresses. She offered to have IT consultant, Jonathan Sykes, provide direction on accessing the calendar. The final voucher for the entire EEOC contract has been submitted. Over \$1,125,955.00 will be deposited into the General Fund. There have also been some significant settlement amounts awarded to complainants. Of note: some commissioners need to activate a state commissioner email address. They should follow up with Darian for assistance.

In conclusion, she noted the next *Lunch and a Movie* event will be held on October 23 at 450 Columbus. The focus will be on Disability Employment Awareness. She also noted the Leaders and Legends event planned for November 14<sup>th</sup> at the Aqua Turf in Southington and encouraged the commissioners to attend as guests of CHRO.

### **Outreach Report**

Managing Legal director, Michelle Dumas Keuler reported that all activities/events that took place in September were significant, the social media team is very active on Facebook and Instagram; KCA is flourishing with the last two sessions remaining.

CHRO was represented at the Hartford Pride event, at the Bloomfield Senior Expo, the Puerto Rican Parade, and the Veteran Stand Down in various location around the State.

### **Legislative Update**

This report was tabled until the next Commission meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 13.

### **Legal Update**

Legal Managing Director Kimberly Jacobsen reported on two harassment default cases that resulted in substantial monetary compensation. One case resulted in the complainant receiving \$35K in wages that were withheld and front pay that included an order of \$75K in emotional distress. The second case, involving racial bias, resulted in the complainant receiving \$384 for a three-day suspension and \$50K in emotional distress.

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

The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**To Adjourn**

Motion: E. Pestana

Second: T. Titre

Discussion: None

Vote

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

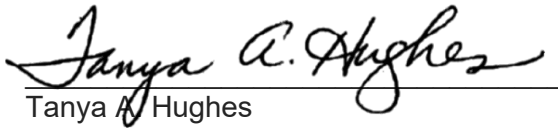
Did Not Vote: 1 (Kapoor)

**The motion carried.**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:13 PM.

The Minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting dated October 9, 2024, were approved on November 13, 2024.

Prepared by:

  
Tanya A. Hughes