

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 9, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

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

Commissioners Absent

Alex Harris

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director	Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Executive Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director	Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director	Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager
Jonathan Sykes, HRO Attorney	Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Catherine Spain, HRO Attorney	Timothy Lewendon, HRO Attorney
Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison	Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Celine Gambuzza, HRO Legal Intern	Rashaud Conway, HRO Legal Intern
Kellye Hudson, Executive Secretary	Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary
Laura Thurston Assistant Attorney General	Jeri Beckford, EEO Specialist II

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the July 9, 2025, meeting at 2:05 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Chair Kapoor noted a quorum had been established with seven out of eight Commissioners present. Commissioner Harris was absent.

He reminded everyone that the meeting is held in a public forum and will be recorded and posted as such.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Secretary Mambruno announced that former CHRO Regional Director Jim Flynn had passed away and asked for a moment of silence in his memory. He then requested a motion to approve the 2025-06-11 Commission Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve the 2025-06-11 Commission Meeting Minutes:

Motion: E. Pestana

Seconded: T. Titre

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp

Department of Aging and Disability Services

Staff representing the Department of Aging and Disability Services were Commissioner Amy Porter, Deputy Commissioner Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, Human Resources Business Partner Jennifer Napiello, and Human Resources Specialist-Equal Employment Opportunity Jordan Kubik.

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: 12 out of 36 possible goals were met or 33.3%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 4 out of 19 possible goals were met or 21.1%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 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 Aging and Disability Services and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton

Second: E. Mambruno

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services

Staff representing the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services were Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Chief Administrative Officer Shannon Wegele, Equal Employment Opportunity Director Barbara Viadella, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 2

Michelle Beeckman, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 1, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 1 Ancy Destin, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 1 Keiyanna Hairston, and Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 1 Ana Correa.

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, 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: 111 out of 265 possible goals were met or 42%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 41 out of 69 possible goals were met or 72%
- Program Goal Achievement: There were no Program Goal Achieved
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The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Disapproved.

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

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Connecticut Military Department

Staff representing the Connecticut Military Department were Adjutant General of Connecticut Major General Francis J. Evon, Jr, Assistant to the Adjutant General Colonel Michael Sipples, Legal Counsel Major Erich J. Heinonen, Fiscal Administrative Manager Maria Morales-Diaz, Human Resources AAP Coordinator Selestian Patterson, and Property Procurement Officer Michael Lynch.

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, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency had deficiencies in the prior plan review and addressed them and therefore, is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 3 out of 13 possible goals were met or 21%

- Promotional Goal Achievement: 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 Disapproved, 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Disapproved 2019 Disapproved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Connecticut Military Department and to maintain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

Staff representing The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities were Executive Director Tanya A. Hughes, Deputy Director Cheryl A. Sharp, and Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist II/ADA & CFEPA Jeri D. Beckford.

This plan was recommended for conditional 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, 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 16 possible goals were met or 63%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: There were no promotional goals set
- Program Goal Achievement: 6 out of 6 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved, 2021 Approved, 2019 Conditionally Approved, 2017 Approved, 2015 Conditionally Approved.

To Conditionally Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and to retain Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)
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. Aryanna Melendez v. Windows Treatment Unlimited Plus, LLC
CHRO Case No. 2530023
Presented by HRO Attorney II Timothy Lewendon

To Grant the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2530023 Aryanna Melendez v. Windows Treatment Unlimited Plus, LLC.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: E. Pestana

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

2. Lynda Jordan-Parker v. Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
CHRO Case No. 2510133; EEOC Charge 16A202500031
Presented by HRO Attorney Catherine M. Spain

To Deny the Request to Reopen CHRO Case No. 2510133 Lynda Jordan-Parker v. Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 1 (Mambruno)

Abstain: 1 (Pestana)

Absent: 1 (Harris)

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 v. Electrical Power Solutions, LLC - Contract Compliance Complaint
Presented by HRO Legal Intern Celine Gambuzza, HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes, and HRO Attorney Spencer Hill
2. CHRO v. Blizzard Mechanical, LLC – Contract Compliance Complaint
Presented by HRO Legal Intern Rashaud Conway, HRO Attorney Spencer Hill and HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes

To enter Executive Session and to invite into the Executive Session the following individuals: Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp, Managing Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston, Attorney Jonathan Sykes, Attorney Spencer Hill, Legal Intern Celine Gambuzza, Legal Intern Rashaud Conway, and for technical assistance Executive Intern Parker DelPrado.

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The Executive Session began at 3:54 PM.

Commissioners Kapoor, Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs and Titre returned after Executive Session at 4:13 PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission Meeting in public session.

VII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS

1. CHRO v. Electrical Power Solutions, LLC – Contract Compliance Complaint
Presented by HRO Legal Intern Celine Gambuzza, HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes, and HRO Attorney Spencer Hill

To file the complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Office of Public Hearing, and with thanks to Legal Intern Celine Gambuzza for her work on this.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: T. Titre

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: (0)

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Norton)

2. CHRO v. Blizzard Mechanical, LLC – Contract Compliance Complaint

Presented by HRO Legal Intern Rashaud Conway, HRO Attorney Spencer Hill and HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes

To file the complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Office of Public Hearing, and with thanks to Legal Intern Rashaud Conway for his work on this.

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: E. Mambruno

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: (0)

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

VIII. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Director Hughes took a moment to thank Commissioner Mambruno for noting the passing of the former CHRO Regional Director Jim Flynn. She further informed that instructions had been given to forward the notice and his obituary and private family services agency-wide with a cc to the Commissioners.

She stated that the CHRO had a very busy month closing out the books for the end of the year. Meetings have taken place with various State Departments/agencies to include the Department of Labor, EEO, HR, OLR, OAG, and BITS. She informed that the new Human Resources Director, Richard Madden, had come on board, hit the ground running, and was working with the CHRO on various matters. She concluded that he has proven thus far to be a very welcome resource to the agency.

Director Hughes reported that Procurement Forums were taking place with executive staff receiving training on the changes in response to the new General Letter 71 and how payments will be processed. Further updates, training, and guidance on processing travel requests are forthcoming.

She further reported that Attorney Spencer Hill is leading the Disparity Study implementation activities. Meetings have already started with a regular cadence and a robust committee. Attorneys Dumas Keuler and Jacobsen are working with State Manager Johnette Tolliver on updating the CHRO's handbooks, forms, and procedures. The agency-wide training session held at the Artist Collective proved to be very engaging and offered some stellar presentations by both guest presenters and staff. Specifically, to name a few:

- Attorney Brooke Goff and Attorney Jay Williams.
- DE&I presentation from the Office of Diversity and Equity within the Judicial Department.
- State Ethics Presentation

She noted that work continues on the Civil Rights Museum with plans coming together with the Artist Collective. Regular meetings continue to occur with CHRO's Northeast partners, EEOC and HUD, with respect to executive orders and the effect they have on the respective contracts. CHRO's HUD performance appraisal and assessment of the contract are also underway. We monitor all activity at the federal level and make certain that all the agency's submissions comply so that reimbursement for the federal contracts continue is also ongoing. She also noted adjustments to the Executive Director's end-of-year Production Report were needed. The figures will be corrected and circulated.

She concluded by noting the effects of being severely understaffed, its effect on the agency, specifically the clerical staff. As a result, plans are in place to investigate ways to utilize artificial Intelligence or ChatGPT as the current intake model being used is not sustainable.

Outreach Report

Deputy Executive Cheryl Sharp reported that the Bond package that recently passed indicated that the Commission would get up to \$5,000,000 to initiate and create the Civil Rights Museum. Progress has been made with the Artist Collective, the potential host venue for the Museum, and the Department of Administrative Services to assist with the negotiation of any transactions related to leasing. A full application was submitted to the Bond Committee. The agency is now waiting for a hearing date.

The Internship Program is well underway, and the current interns are preparing for their summer symposium related to immigration. It will focus on the state policies related to immigration, and the effects on individuals based on their national origin. This year's symposium will be held at the Legislative Office Building on July 30th. An invitation to join was extended to the Commissioners.

She also informed that the regional offices continue to do extensive outreach in the regions and towns in their jurisdiction. As a result, the CHRO is being invited to more events that have led to outreach opportunities. These opportunities have

increased the number of complaints seen in some of the regions. The Civil Rights Unites Tour continues and is also a good venue for outreach.

Legislative Update

Tabled. Darcy Jones was on vacation. Chair Kapoor entreated the group to read the information provided by Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand on all bills that passed that are relevant to our agency.

Legal Update

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen explained the reconsideration/ appeal opportunities that a complainant can explore if unhappy with the outcome of their case. She explained that there are basically three things that can be done.

1. They can ask for reconsideration, which consists of an internal review done by the legal department that results in a written decision.
2. They can request a reopening of their case, which is heard by the Commission, or,
3. They can file an administrative appeal.

She went on to describe a recently closed administrative appeal case where the complainant believed he had been discriminated against by a bank due to his race. After a full investigation the case was dismissed for no reasonable cause. The Complainant filed a timely appeal under the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act that resulted in the Judge finding that the CHRO handled the case properly. The case was dismissed on June 2. The Complainant has not filed an appeal for that decision but does have the right to appeal to the appellate court and try to get the Supreme Court to hear his case.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

X. ADJOURNMENT

To Adjourn:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

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

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Harris)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 PM.