



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
BI-MONTHLY PUBLIC MEETING**

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING

Via Microsoft Teams & at Metropolitan Square Building

May 11, 2022

ATTENDEES

Commissioners

Motoko Aizawa, Chair
Brian Griffey, Vice Chair
Karen Mulhauser, Secretary
Maria Burnett
Adam E. Maier
Anika Simpson
Teri Janine Quinn
Wynter Allen

Office of Human Rights Staff

Hnin Khaing, Interim Director
General Counsel: Andrea Goplerud
Ajan Brown, Community Engagement Specialist
Ernest Shepard, Youth Bullying Prevention Manager
Larry Villegas-Perez, Tipped Wage Worker Fairness Program Manager
Rosa Carrillo, Language Access Program Director

Commission on Human Rights Staff

Erika Pierson, Chief Administrative Law Judge

Guests

Christy Respress, Pathways to Housing
Robert Baldwin

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Chair Aizawa called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

- a. Secretary Mulhauser conducted the roll call. A quorum was present.

III. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

- a. The 05/11/2022 agenda was adopted as circulated.

IV. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

- a. The minutes of the 03/09/2022 meeting of the Commission was adopted as circulated.

- V. Robert Baldwin, who is waiting confirmation as a new Commissioner, was welcomed.

VI. **GUEST SPEAKER CHRISTY RESPRESS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PATHWAYS TO HOUSING IN DC WAS INTRODUCED AND GAVE REMARKS**

Ms. Respress received the DC Human Rights Commission's Cornelius R. 'Neil' Alexander Humanitarian Award on December 7, 2021.

[Pathways to Housing in DC](#) elevates the voices of the homeless and believes that every single person matters. The mission is to end homelessness through housing first and support recovery for people with complex health challenges. They provide services after asking what the homeless individuals want. Pathways offers housing PLUS services to reconnect. Homelessness is down, but the numbers reflect that high percentages of homeless are people of color and LGBTQ.

There was discussion about the people living in tents in DC. The National Parks Service will clear tents from Union Station and NY Avenue on June 24. Ms. Respress expressed appreciation for the work of the DC Office of Human Rights and its Commission for raising awareness about homelessness.

VII. **LANGUAGE ACCESS**

- a. **Rosa Carrillo**, Language Access Program Director discussed the Annual Compliance Review Report. There are 8 covered entities. A report will be submitted the end of September and all data collected in November. There was a question about whether sign language came under the scope of the language access program. Ms. Carrillo clarified that sign language comes under the oversight of the DC Department of Disability Services and not OHR.

VIII. **NEW OHR STAFF**

- a. The following new OHR staff members were introduced to the Commission and welcomed:
 - i. Andrea Copeland, General Counsel

- ii. Ernest Shepard, Youth Bullying Prevention Manager
- iii. Juliette Markham Niehuss, Deputy General Counsel, was introduced by the General Counsel in her absence.

IX. REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR

Interim Director Khaing provided the following updates to the Commission:

- a. Budget oversight: OHR does not expect any significant reduction in the FY 23 Budget.
- b. The Human Rights Enhancement Amendment Act: If it becomes law, it will protect individuals experiencing homelessness from discrimination; provide for training to law enforcement on the impact of enforcement decisions on people experiencing homelessness; and prohibit employment discrimination against contractors and enhance protections against workplace harassment. Homelessness will become another protected trait under the DC Human Rights Act, such as in employment. Because this will affect OHR's work in the future, Director Khaing promised to keep the Commission updated on future developments.
- c. An Industry Study is underway to learn how we compare with similar human rights offices in other jurisdictions. The study is on track and a draft will be shared with the Commission in due course.
- d. Two Listening Labs were mentioned. The first Listening Lab took place on March 24. It discussed a number of issues of concern, including sexual harassment and assault among high school and middle school students. The person who mentioned this did not know that sexual harassment is illegal. This defines an area of training and can also become an area of focus in the proposed youth ambassador program. Another Listening Lab on April 28 focused on fair housing to commemorate the Fair Housing month.
- e. Pride Parade and activities in June was mentioned as in-person activities are returning. The OHR plans to participate in the events and invited the Commissioners to also join.

X. REPORT OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

Chief Judge Erika Pierson provided a report for the Commission, highlighting the following:

- a. Three new Commissioners are in the confirmation process in the DC Council Government Operations Committee. One Commissioner, Timothy

Thomas, has resigned effective immediately, As a result, there are now two vacancies that need to be filled, once the three are confirmed.

- b. Four Commissioners' term are up this year; Aizawa, Griffey, Mulhauser, and Quinn. They can ask for reappointment in August.
- c. Tribunals: There are four cases that are ready to proceed to the tribunals, and two additional cases will be ready soon. The Department of General Services (DGS) has agreed to let the Commission have the former Board of Elections hearing room, located on the 2nd Floor of 441 4th Street, NW, next to the Commission offices. It requires some renovation,
- d. Commissioners' financial disclosure reports must indicate they have had ethics training for the year. Commissioners can receive online training via MOTA's website.
- e. Chief Judge Pierson provided an update on the progress with the case management system, as well as the litigation manual. She shared some examples of the manual with the Commissioners.

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION

- a. Chair Aizawa mentioned that the COHR study that was intended to complement the OHR Industry Study will now take a different course. COHR will prioritize digitizing past tribunal decisions that were archived, so that fully digitized cases will be available from 2010 onward. COHR hopes to work with OHR to engage an intern, who will be tasked to undertake digitization and cataloguing of past decisions. Once this is done, COHR will be in a position to analyze past cases.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Chief Judge Pierson reported that the amendments to Rules #408 and #401 are finally ready to be formalized. The changes had been earlier approved by the Rules Committee. The Commission approved the new Rules by acclamation.
- b. Chair Aizawa mentioned a proposal of the Executive Committee that the Commission meet monthly rather than bi-monthly in the interest of allowing time for other agenda items beyond the standing business, such as guest speakers and training. Vice Chair Griffey added that rather than add hours to the bi-monthly meetings, we could meet monthly, keep the standing agenda items to be discussed in an hour, with additional 30 minutes to be dedicated to speakers and training. Commissioner Mair supported the suggested change but indicated Wednesdays are not good for Commission meetings. Others pointed out that the evening hours

conflict with family activities. Vice Chair Griffey will circulate a survey to determine whether Commissioners prefer the new meeting configuration and if so the day/time for the monthly meeting.

XIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Outreach Committee: Commissioner Mulhauser mentioned that there are now three members on the Outreach Committee in addition to herself [one member, Commissioner Thomas resigned]. The Committee will soon receive training. One possible area of needed outreach is with DC youth to help them understand the protected rights and how to express concerns.
- b. Awards Committee: Acting Committee Chair Aizawa indicated that she is looking for a volunteer to join the Committee. This Committee will have to start to become active soon to be able to organize the Gala in December.
- c. Rules Committee: There was not a report at this meeting

XIV. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

- a. Chair Aizawa adjourned the meeting at 8:11 PM