

MINUTES

CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS (CCHR) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING FEBRUARY 27, 2025

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Nancy Andrade, Chair
Marta Cerda
Jennifer Eleazar
Naderh Hana Elrabadi
Juliet C. Gilbert
Rey Gonzalez
Vanessa Harris
Daniel R. Hernandez (via Zoom)

Esther Nieves
Pamala M. Silas
Micheal Takada
Kim Waller

Staff Present:

Maria Balderas
Alex Chaves
Marisol Gallegos
Kenneth Gunn

Kristen Lee
JoAnn Newsome
Daniel Serrano

Call to Order

Commissioner Andrade welcomed all and introduced the new board members: Vanessa, Naderh, Juliet, and Pamala. Board members and CCHR staff introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Andrade asked for a motion to approve the minutes from September 10, 2024. Micheal Takada moved with a request for the correction of the spelling of his surname. The motion was seconded by Ray. All were in favor of approving the September 10, 2024, minutes with the correction.

Case Review

JoAnn presented the case for review: Patricia Holloway v Gold Star Hospitality, Inc. d/b/a Burger King. She went into detail about the case and the Hearing Officer's recommendation.

On February 27, 2023, Complainant Patricia Holloway filed a Complaint with the Commission on Human Relations against Respondent Gold Star Hospitality, Inc. d/b/a Burger King. Complainant alleged that Respondent failed to provide a designated accessible parking space at its public accommodation in violation of Chapter 6-10 of the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance ("CHRO"). Respondent failed to comply with Commission Rule 210.260 by failing to file and serve a

response to Complainant's Complaint. On April 11, 2023, the Commission mailed to Respondent an Order to Respond and Notice of Potential Default. Respondent failed to file and serve a Response in this matter. On June 2, 2023, the Commission entered an Order of Default against Respondent. The Commission also consolidated the two cases by order dated June 2, 2023. The Hearing Officer recommends that the Commission find that Complainant Patricia Holloway has established a claim of disability discrimination against Respondent Gold Star Hospitality d/b/a Burger King for failure to provide an accessible parking space, and that Respondent is therefore liable for disability discrimination in violation of the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance. As detailed above, the following relief is recommended:

1. Payment to Complainant of emotional distress damages in the amount of \$500;
2. Payment of interest on the foregoing damages from the date of violation on January 25, 2023;
3. Payment to the City of Chicago of a fine of \$5,000;
4. Compliance with the order for injunctive relief requiring Respondent to provide accessible parking in its parking lot; and
5. Reasonable attorney fees and costs.

JoAnn added, even though there's an order of default, the complainant still must establish a prima facie case. That she is number one, a member of a protected class, in this case a person with a disability, that she was qualified to use the services of the public accommodation she sought, and she was denied full and equal enjoyment of those facilities by the respondent. Marta and Kim were on the board panel for this case. The board members asked questions and discussed the case. Commissioner Andrade asked for a motion to approve the recommendations of the hearing officer. Juliet moved and it was seconded by Esther. All were in favor except for one opposition. The motion still carried.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Andrade asked Alex to present on the CCHR marketing initiatives. Alex reported on the following: New discrimination facts booklet, My Family Has Changed (social story), and the launch of CCHR's new podcast.

The social story is a source or a tool that parents can use to teach their children how to cope with family separation, especially considering the new federal administration's immigration policies. Commissioner Andrade added that the social story will be shared with CPS as well. Alex noted the podcast will focus on civil rights and will feature in-depth discussions about civil rights, social justice, and equality. The first episode already aired, and the plan is to drop a new episode every other Tuesday. It will be available on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.

Board members recommended translating the social story to additional languages besides English and Spanish and sharing it with immigration legal assistance providers such as the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Jennifer suggested creating a graphic novel. Juliet recommended sharing it with the Metropolitan Tenants Association. Board members also recommended connecting the podcast to universities and community colleges. Commissioner Andrade stated all board members are invited to be interviewed for the podcast.

Commissioner Andrade informed the board about an order signed by Mayor Johnson on transfemicide back in December 2024. The LGBTQ+ community has been very concerned about this and wanted to create awareness about the needs of the transgender community. Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa introduced an ordinance which mirrors the executive order signed by the Mayor. The ordinance has been official since February 19. The ordinance states that CCHR is to convene a working group to address the issue of transfemicide; specifically on the topics of hate crimes and hate incidents, the police investigative process of hate incidents and hate crimes, along with homicide, regarding the transgender community. The ordinance states that CCHR will work with the Chicago Police Department, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Family Support Services and will form an internal working group. The internal working group meeting has been convened. The next step is to have a stakeholder meeting with leaders from the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the stakeholders on board are Brave Space Alliance, Chicago Therapy Collection, and Howard Brown Health. The ordinance asks for an inter-governmental approach. Representatives from the Cook County government will provide input. Other stakeholders include LAMDA Legal, the Soji Commission of the American Bar Association, the Illinois Hate Crimes Commission, and the office of the Mexican Consulate General. The ordinance also calls for three community meetings. Board members will be invited to the meetings.

The board members discussed the implications of the Trump administration policies. Ray noted the challenges facing El Valor. Staff and client families are in fear of ICE raids, deportation, and family separations. The loss of federal funding and grants. Esther spoke about the importance of convening and uniting efforts from the City, faith community, legal community, and community-based organizations to inform, train, and provide resources to parents.

Commissioner Andrade noted the importance of board members offering guidance on how to address these issues that directly align with the Commission. She proposed establishing committees. Daniel Hernandez spoke about his law firm's work with the Mexican Consulate. As one of their legal providers, his firm helped create a template for short-term guardianship that the Mexican Consulate is providing to Mexican nationals. This form allows them to name someone as the guardian to their children if they are detained or deported. Commissioner Andrade asked Daniel Hernandez if he could conduct a presentation on this topic at El Valor. Juliet and Marisol provided further clarification regarding the short-term guardianship.

Pamala echoed the importance of a strong, consistent, and unified message to respond to the challenges and to use "our voices" collectively. Commissioner Andrade stated CCHR has rebranded "Know Your Rights" to "Know Your Rights about Discrimination". CCHR is focusing on discrimination to address the increase in discrimination incidents. CCHR's goal is to have a trustworthy relationship with the community so that the community can come forward and file discrimination complaints.

Unit Reports

Adjudication: JoAnn reported that the Adjudication Unit recently added two legal interns. They are both Loyola Law School students. The interns will be assisting with updating CCHR's subject matter index. She reminded new board members about the upcoming board orientation. She will be updating the board panel schedule and announced there will be two cases to review at

the next meeting. JoAnn reported that this year CCHR received 26 new complaint filings and that 47 investigations have been completed. There are 41 cases in the hearing stage. Thirty of them are going forward to settlement conferences.

Inter Group Relations: Daniel Serrano gave a brief overview on the work of the Inter Group Relations Unit: Community tension mediation; workshops; community outreach; and hate crime victim advocacy. CCHR will be hiring a new hate crime victim advocate to assist the current hate crime victim advocate address the increasing numbers of hate crime and hate incidents. 2023 saw the highest number of hate crimes nationally and in Chicago. Although the numbers dropped slightly last year, CCHR anticipates the number of cases will go up. Daniel reported on the Hate Crime Pilot Project. CCHR is partnering with community-based organizations to provide a safe place where victims of a hate crimes can meet with police officers to report their hate crime. Many people do not want to call the police directly because they are already traumatized. CCHR wants to make it as easy as possible for them to be able to report so that it can be addressed through the criminal justice system.

Advisory Council Reports

Equity: Esther reported that Carla Kupe has been appointed the City's new Chief Equity Officer. The Equity Council is working on a meeting calendar.

Women: Jennifer stated the name of the advisory council did not change.

Veterans: Ken shared there is a very active Director of Veterans Affairs in the Mayor's office who is reaching out to all neighborhoods. The Veteran's Council recently put out a newsletter and is recruiting new members.

New Business

Commissioner Andrade asked if there was any new business. Pamala announced that Mayor Johnson has formed a Native American Engagement Council.

Public Comments:

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Andrade asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Esther moved and it was seconded by Marta. All were in favor.