

**BUDGET STATEMENT
FY2015**

**MONA NORIEGA
CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONER
CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**

OCTOBER 23, 2014

Honorable Chairman Austin and Honorable Members of the City Council Committee on the Budget and Government Operations:

I am pleased to appear before you today to present the 2015 budget proposal for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

In furtherance of the Mayor and City Council's stand against hate and bigotry, and to provide high quality anti-discrimination services to more Chicagoans, the CCHR continues to work hard to broaden our outreach efforts to new communities through a variety of initiatives and programs. Our goal for 2015 is to not only reach more Chicagoans, but also to offer our services and materials in many additional languages to better serve Chicago's diverse population, while submitting a balanced budget without additional staffing requests.

Background

The CCHR serves as the City of Chicago's Civil Rights agency. The CCHR addresses issues of discrimination by enforcing the Chicago Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances. We carry out this work through our Adjudication Unit, Inter-Group Relations Unit (IGR), and Advisory Councils.

The Adjudication Division receives and investigates complaints of discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, public accommodations, and credit.

CHR's Inter-Group Relations Unit (IGR) mediates conflicts, advocates on behalf of victims of hate crimes, and proactively works to prevent discrimination through the delivery of educational programs.

The Advisory Councils to the Commission (Equity and Women & LGBT) convene representatives of the protected classes to serve as a resource for the Mayor and City Council on policy matters regarding civil rights and to assist the CCHR in creating programs and outreach strategies to communities that experience discrimination and hate based violence.

Investigating and Adjudicating Discrimination Complaints

When a person (referred to as a "complainant") files a discrimination complaint with our office, it is most often because they believe they have been wrongfully denied an employment opportunity, a place to live, or access to a public place or service. The CCHR represents the City's commitment to civil rights and the process by which the complainant seeks redress.

The CCHR has continued to strive to deliver the most thorough and efficient investigations of discrimination complaints as possible. High quality and timely investigations are essential to protecting the rights of both parties to a complaint, and help ensure that justice is served.

- From January 1, 2014 through October 10, 2014, the CCHR received 199 new discrimination complaints, and completed 206 investigations. The 206 total includes complaints filed in 2014

and earlier. The efficient investigation of complaints keeps cases from becoming backlogged and justice being denied to victims of discrimination.

- Similarly, 63% of investigations have been completed within one year as of November 1, 2014 as compared to 57% for the same time period in 2013.

In addition to the investigation of complaints, the CCHR has worked for several months with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) to develop new regulations for public accommodation disability complaints. The new regulations closely mirror the regulations of the ADA thereby making them more familiar to small businesses and attorneys. The goal is to process complaints associated with this regulation, enhance business awareness of this initiative and to improve compliance with the ordinance. The regulations were recently approved by our Board of Commissioners and will become effective in March of 2015.

Creating Opportunities to Connect with Communities

Discrimination can affect different people and different communities in various ways. To ensure that the CCHR is able to reach all of the city's diverse communities, we have crafted specific outreach strategies.

- As the City continues to expand its efforts to reach out to Chicago's many immigrant communities, the CCHR works to transcend language barriers and serve non-English speaking communities. For the past two years, we have worked with our volunteer Equity Council members and Board of Commissioners to reach out to several immigrant communities. Our volunteers translated the CCHR brochure into Spanish, Polish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Hindi, and Russian. The volunteers have also been helpful in proofreading and testing translations provided by contracted service providers. The Equity Council and Board of Commissioners, all representatives of specific communities, have contributed to crafting and executing a strategic distribution plan that targets the communities most impacted by discrimination.
- In addition to reaching immigrant communities through our printed materials, the CCHR has also kicked off the launch of our new translation service for incoming calls through Language Line Inc. Through this service the CCHR will now be able to receive calls from Polish, Arabic, Hindi, and Chinese speakers. This ties in well with our continuing outreach efforts to these communities.
- The Equity Council has made it a priority to reach out to the communities represented by its membership: Asian, Arab, African descendent, and Latino. The council regularly holds its meetings in the community where members of the community can come and learn about the council and the work of the CCHR. For many, this is their first contact with the CCHR. Similarly, Equity Council members attend and participate in community fairs and events across the city serving as ambassadors for the CCHR while gaining new insights into communities with which they may have had limited interaction.
- The CCHR has instituted a very successful Chicago Ethnic Museum Tour Series. On a strictly voluntary basis, CCHR staff, volunteers, families, and friends join together every other month to visit one of the city's fascinating ethnic museums. We arrange to have tours of the facilities and conclude with an ethnic lunch in the vicinity of the museum or on the museum grounds. Through these visits participants learn about the culture and history, as well as the triumphs and tragedies of our neighbors and fellow Chicagoans. Thus far in 2014, we have visited the Cambodian-American Heritage Museum, the National Museum of Mexican Art, the DuSable Museum of African-American History, and the Polish Museum of America. Our last visit for 2014

will be to see the recently opened Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture in November. These museum visits help to build a cultural bridge of understanding which helps to dissolve the barriers between us.

- Recognizing that the legal field and service providers are stakeholders in filing complaints on behalf of, and in referring their constituents, we have expanded our efforts to provide more technical workshops and presentations about the Chicago Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances to bar associations and other issue specific organizations.

Fighting Hate Crimes through Education

Hate crimes continue to be a concern for all communities, but they are particularly problematic for people of color, different religious groups, immigrants, people with disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Chicagoans. Hate crimes run the range from simple battery and property damage to death, and can invoke fear among entire communities.

We have created a curriculum for parents and students and have the flexibility to deliver our programs in English and Spanish. Understanding that hate is born from ignorance which often begins with bullying behavior in school, the CCHR engages students to address how and why bullying occurs and how it can be stopped. Workshops for parents in Bullying and Cyberbullying help adults recognize signs of their child being a bully or being bullied, and provide opportunities to participate in role play intervention strategies. The goal is to be responsive to communities and schools that are experiencing bullying, to lessen the prevalence of this behavior, and have an outcome of reduced hate incidents. As of October 10, 2014, the CCHR has delivered 39 workshops to 731 participants.

In addition to our ongoing workshops and presentations, on October 20, 2014, the CCHR and other collaborating organizations will be hosting a Hate Crime Summit at the University of Illinois, Chicago Campus. The event is in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the Matthew Shepard & James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act that President Obama signed into law in October 2009.

Through the Hate Crime Summit, we aim to raise awareness regarding hate crimes, address the barriers to reporting hate crimes, improve recognition and utilization of resources for victims of hate crimes, and provide opportunities for networking and collaboration. Long term results we seek include a better understanding of the phenomena of hate crimes, which includes information sharing among stakeholders and increased academic studies and data collection of hate crimes.

The target audience for the summit includes educators, students, law enforcement, researchers, and service providers, and members of the public who are interested in learning more about this important topic. As of October 14, 2014 nearly 200 people have registered for the program.

We are proud of our initiatives and look forward to further innovations in program delivery. The ultimate goal is to create a more efficient and effective Commission that better serves the needs of Chicagoans facing discrimination. We hope that you will give our budget request your most thoughtful consideration so we may continue and improve upon this important work. Thank you.

Chicago Commission on Human Relations 2015 Programmatic Organizational Chart

