

# COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



## At a Glance

**TANYA A. HUGHES**, Executive Director

Cheryl A. Sharp, Deputy Director

Established – 1943

Statutory Authority – CGS Chapter 814c

Central office – 450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103

Website – [www.portalct.gov/chro](http://www.portalct.gov/chro)

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**2023- 2024 Budget: \$12,061,132** (\$7,812,605 in Personal Services; \*\$4,248,527 in Other Expenses)  
Number of positions filled: 90 (7581 full-time; 8 Temporary or Durational); Authorized positions: 91 full-time plus 9 durational employees. During this period, we had 23 new hires and six positions that were converted to permanent positions from temporary or durational.

\*\$4,000,000 of this budget was appropriated for the Disparity and Equity Studies. See Legislative description for full discussion.

**Organizational structure:** A nine-member commission establishes policy. The Executive Director manages/oversees the administrative office, legal department and four regional offices, and independent Human Rights Referees hear contested cases.

## Mission

The mission of the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is to eliminate discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and to establish equal opportunity and justice for all within the state through advocacy and education.

## Statutory Responsibility:

The statutory responsibility of the Commission is to:

- Eliminate illegal discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit transactions through education and law enforcement.
- Monitor contract compliance laws and small contractor set-aside provisions by state agencies, contractors, and subcontractors.
- Review and monitor state agency affirmative action plans and compliance with laws requiring affirmative action and equal opportunity in state government.

- Establish equal opportunity and justice for all persons in Connecticut through education and outreach; and
- Provide sexual harassment prevention training for all residents.

### **Public Service**

The Commission is headed by a policy-making body consisting of nine members. Five of the members are appointed by the Governor and the leadership of the General Assembly appoints four. All new appointments require legislative approval through the advice and consent of the House and Senate. The Commission conducts regular monthly meetings on the second Wednesday of the month. The Commission conducts special meetings as it deems necessary.

For the first time in many, many years, all nine Commissioner seats were filled at the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner Nicholas Kapoor was reappointed by Speaker of the House in 2023 and appointed as Chairperson by Governor Ned Lamont in August 2023. Continuing as commissioners were Secretary Edward Mambruno, and Commissioners Andrew Norton, Edith Pestana, Joseph Suggs, Lisa Giliberto, and Alex Harris (appointed May 23, 2023). Two vacancies were also filled August 2023 with the appointments of Tamara J. Titre and Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox, completing the roster.

An Executive Director appointed by the Commission oversees the operations of the agency. Executive Director Tanya Hughes was appointed Interim Executive Director on July 13, 2013, and re-appointed to three four-year terms. Her current appointment expires September 15, 2025. The agency's administrative office, located in Hartford, houses the Office of the Executive Director, Tanya Hughes, the Office of the Deputy Director, Cheryl Sharp, the Legal Division, the Affirmative Action Unit, the Contract Compliance Unit, the Fair Housing Unit, and the Office of Public Hearings. There are also four regional offices located in Hartford, Bridgeport, Norwich, and Waterbury.

- Capital Region (Hartford) – Jose Michael Gonzalez, Manager (hired September 2023)
- West Central Region (Waterbury) – Shawn Burns, Manager
- Eastern Region (Norwich) – Robert Aldi, Manager
- Southwest Region (Bridgeport) – Jamie Rubin, Manager (resigned May 2024)

### **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR COMMISSION:**

By statute, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities serves as the secretariat for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission (MLK). The State of CT Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission was established in 1986 to ensure that the commemoration of Dr. King's birthday is meaningful and reflective of the spirit with which he lived and the struggles for which he died. The purpose of the statewide Commission is to unify and educate communities within the State of Connecticut and encourage meaningful observations, ceremonies, and activities in commemoration of the federal holiday and state legal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. throughout the towns, cities, school districts, counties, and local government within Connecticut.

The annual budget for this commission is \$5,977.

### **IMPROVEMENTS/ ACHIEVEMENTS 2022- 2023**

The legal department is the largest unit with 27 staff members. It is overseen by Attorney Michelle Dumas-Kueler, Managing Director of Housing/Training, and Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, Managing Director of Employment. Both attorneys bring decades of experience as attorneys with demonstrated dedication, commitment, resulting in quality services to stakeholders, staff, and the public. They oversee a robust litigation department that also provides training and education services to the public, legislature, and sister state agencies.

## **Litigation Summary 2023-2024**

### Connecticut Supreme Court

*Dept. of Public Health v. Estrada* – While the Supreme Court ultimately disagreed with the Referee’s conclusion that the Complainant had established a causal connection in support of her whistleblower retaliation complaint, the Court held that: the State has waived its sovereign immunity for monetary claims arising under the whistleblower statute; a state employee’s prior filing of union grievances arising out of the same adverse employment actions does not preclude such employee from seeking monetary relief for whistleblower retaliation through OPH; and a state employee who reports their own error qualifies for statutory protection against whistleblower retaliation. The CHRO was represented before the Superior Court by Attorney Scott Madeo; before the Appellate Court by Attorneys Eric Krupa, Anna-Marie Puryear, and Michael Roberts; and before the Supreme Court by Attorneys Anna-Marie Puryear and Megan Graefe.

### Connecticut Appellate Court

*Found. for the Adv. of Catholic Schools v. The Most Rev. Leonard Blair* – An amicus brief on behalf of the CHRO was filed in this case, which involves the standards by which courts determine the application of constitutional religious freedom doctrines. The brief was written by Attorney Michael Roberts, with Attorney Libby Reinish having successfully drafted the CHRO’s amicus application.

### Connecticut Superior Court

*Mago v. Dept. of Correction* – The CHRO successfully opposed a jurisdictional motion to dismiss filed by the Department of Correction (DOC), having intervened in the action for that purpose. DOC had moved to dismiss the case on multiple erroneous grounds, including that the Superior Court lacked jurisdiction over the plaintiff’s religious discrimination claims because (1) the plaintiff failed to exhaust his administrative remedies within the DOC prior to filing suit; (2) there is no private right of action for violations of Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 46a-58 and 46a-64; and (3) DOC facilities, particularly prisons, are not places of public accommodation. The CHRO was represented by Attorneys Libby Reinish and Megan Graefe.

### CHRO Office of Public Hearings

*CHRO ex rel. Pele v. JFA Mgmt. LLC* – In this housing discrimination default case, it was established that the Respondent discriminated against the Complainant by denying her a reasonable accommodation and retaliated against her because of her disabilities, lawful source of income, and previous CHRO complaint. After a damages hearing, the Referee awarded the Complainant \$150,000 in emotional distress plus post-judgment interest, as well as \$19,215 in attorney’s fees and an order that the Respondent attend the CHRO’s fair housing training,

provide the CHRO with its accommodation policies and forms for review and comment, post fair housing posters, and cease and desist from discriminating against current and prospective tenants. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Jody Walker-Smith.

*CHRO ex rel. Williams v. City of Bridgeport* – The Referee found that the Bridgeport Police Department discriminated against Mr. Williams when they arrested him in a “hostile” and “aggressive” manner after a motor vehicle stop. The Referee awarded \$20,000 in emotional distress damages and ordered that the officers receive training on racial bias and procedural justice. The case is currently on appeal. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Renee Vanden Wall Bake.

*CHRO ex rel. Gallant v. Torrad Associates* – In this public accommodations case, the Referee found that the Respondent discriminated against the Complainant by refusing to provide him MRI services in retaliation and because of his association with his father who had previously filed a CHRO complaint against the Respondent alleging employment discrimination. The Referee issued a cease and desist order and the Complainant was awarded \$7,500 in emotional distress damages. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Robin Trepanier.

*CHRO ex rel. James v. Radical House Tattoos* – In this public accommodation default case, the Referee found that the Respondent discriminated against the Complainant by sexually harassing her both before and during her tattoo sessions, including ultimately not completing her tattoo because she did not return his advances and wanted her male partner to attend the sessions with her. The Complainant was awarded \$35,000 in damages. The CHRO was represented by Attorneys Cassandra Bretones and Robin Fox.

*CHRO ex rel. Moran-Carpentino v. White’s Plumbing Supplies, Inc.* – The Referee denied the Respondent’s attempt to dismiss the Complainant’s sexual harassment, retaliation, and constructive discharge claims, holding that CHRO had jurisdiction over time-barred sexual harassment claims because the complaint alleged continuing violations sufficient to equitably toll the statute of limitations and allege hostile work environment, retaliation, and constructive discharge claims. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Elizabeth Moyse.

*CHRO ex rel. Lacayo Bonilla v. Pegaso Janitorial Services* – In this employment default case, the Referee found that the Respondent discriminated against the Complainant by sexually harassing her during her performance of her work duties and failing to pay her for work completed. The Complainant was awarded \$17,500 in damages. The CHRO was represented by Attorneys Cassandra Bretones and Margaret Nurse-Goodison.

*CHRO ex rel. Willis v. Eric’s Landscaping & Tree Service, LLC* – In this disability discrimination case, the Respondent was defaulted during the investigation stage for failure to attend the fact-finding conference. The Complainant was awarded \$31,192.00 in damages. The CHRO was represented by Attorneys Jody Walker-Smith and Chiedza Rodriguez.

*CHRO ex rel. Fichtner v. Hazelton’s Gourmet & Baskets, LLC* – In this employment discrimination default case, the Referee found that the Respondent discriminated against the Complainant when she was terminated, and her previous reasonable accommodation was thereby revoked. The Complainant was awarded more than \$20,000 in damages. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Timothy Lewendon.

## Other Litigation

*CHRO v. Yale University* – The CHRO initiated a complaint against Yale University for posting an advertisement for a fellowship position that it indicated was designed for a “young professional”. The case was settled shortly after filing for affirmative relief and a \$10,000 contribution to the CHRO’s education and outreach fund. The CHRO was represented by Attorney Michael Roberts throughout the process.

## **LEGISLATION**

The Legislative and Administrative advisor for the CHRO is Attorney Darcy Jones-Strand. She provides exemplary guidance to CHRO through every phase of the legislative process, and with the assistance of its legal department, drafted/proposed legislation and testimony in support and opposition to over 24 raised bills. The State of Connecticut has placed a priority on equality in its business practices. CHRO was responsible for overseeing two studies. One was a Disparity Study that was initiated in July 2022. The State of Connecticut contracted with Griffin and Strong, PC, who examined whether Connecticut's procurement program achieves the State’s goal of identifying and hiring small contractors and minority business enterprises. It was completed in 2023. CHRO worked closely with DAS and OPM to produce the final product report. CHRO partnered with the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH) at the Connecticut General Assembly, to host a symposium, *Cementing Equity in State Government* on January 19, 2024, at the Connecticut State Capitol, Hartford CT.

The symposium was a full day event from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm with speeches and panels focusing on equity in government and coincided with the launch of CREPH's *Dismantling Structural Racism in State Government* report, and CHRO's *Equity Study*. Both reports offered practical recommendations as to how state government policies, operations, and infrastructure can become more equitable to adequately serve the needs of all Connecticut residents. The 2021 budget and implementer included \$4 million for the CHRO to conduct a disparity study and an equity study. The 2021 budget implementer also included language that required the CHRO to work with OPM and DAS to administer the equity study. The state contracted with The Faulkner Consulting Group for the Equity Study, which completed its review of state agencies in consultation with DAS, CHRO, and OPM in November 2023 and will be released to the public in the fall of 2024. Both studies were conducted according to schedule, with an abundance of public input and feedback.

### **2023-2024 Legislation:**

#### **PA 23-145 (HB 6638) – An Act Revising the State’s Antidiscrimination Statutes**

CHRO’s agency bill was requested through the Judiciary Committee.

New definition: “‘Sexual orientation’ means a person’s identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are romantically, emotionally or sexually attracted, inclusive of any identity that a person (A) may have previously expressed, or (B) is perceived by another person to hold.

*Effective July 1, 2023*

#### **PA 23-205 (HB 6942) - bonding bill**

Language included in the bonding bill to deal with concerns that the new definition of “sexual orientation” would make it impermissible to “discriminate” against pedophiles in the workplace.

*Section 192 – 46a-56(a)(3):* Adds language requiring the commission to refer any matter to the Office of the Chief State’s Attorney if it has reason to believe that a person who is a party to a discriminatory practice case has engaged or is engaged in conduct that constitutes a violation of part VI of chapter 952.

*Section 193 – 46a-82(a): Whenever the commission has reason to believe that a person who is a party to a discriminatory practice case has engaged or is engaged in conduct that constitutes a violation of part VI of chapter 952 may refer such matter to the Office of the Chief State’s Attorney.*  
*Effective July 1, 2023*

**PA 23-207 (SB 998) - An Act Establishing a Tax Abatement for Certain Conservation Easements and Addressing Housing Affordability for Residents in the State**

Housing omnibus bill. Includes pieces of HB 6633 (Fair Share), HB 6666 (AA Expanding Renters’ Rights), SB 4, HB 6781.

- *Section 18* – Requires the OPM Secretary to establish a methodology for each municipality’s fair share allocation by December 1, 2024
- *Section 36* – Establishes an Affordable Housing Roundtable Group. First meeting should be in August and first annual report due on January 1, 2024.

*Effective October 1, 2023*

**PA 23-66 (HB 6642) - An Act Concerning a Title IX Compliance Toolkit for School Districts**

Requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity to convene and lead a working group to identify or develop a Title IX compliance toolkit for use by local and regional boards of education, students and parents and guardians and students.

The CHRO is a member of the working group.

The working group is tasked with submitting the toolkit to the Children’s Committee by July 1, 2024.

*Effective July 1, 2023*

**PA 23-101 (SB 2) - An Act Concerning the Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellness of Children**

Section 15 expands the Task Force on the Comprehensive Needs of Children through January 1, 2025. The CHRO has sat on the task force since its inception.

*Effective from passage*

**PA 23-9 (SB 953) - An Act Concerning Racial Profiling**

This bill originated with the CT Racial Profiling Prohibition Project.

It makes important changes to the definition of “racial profiling.” This new definition removes the term “solely” and replaces it with “in whole or in part.” It also makes clear that the racial or ethnic status is as that status is “perceived” by the officer. Finally, it adds language stating language exempting “when such status is used in combination with other information when seeking to apprehend a specific suspect whose racial or ethnic status is part of the description of the suspect.

CHRO has been an active member of this task force since its inception in 2012.

*Effective from passage*

**PA 23-194 (SB 984) - An Act Accelerating the State Hiring Process**

This bill, which originated with the Department of Administrative Services, makes numerous changes in the State Personnel Act.

*Effective July 1, 2023*

**State budget changes:**

*Section 68 – 4a-60g(l): Requires DAS to provide each awarding agency a preliminary report on or before June 30 of each year establishing small and minority business state set-aside program goals for the twelve-month period beginning July first in the same year. (Previously each awarding agency*

established their own goals). On or before September 30 of each year, each awarding agency shall submit a final version to DAS, CHRO and the P&D and GAE Committees.

*Section 85* – Eliminates the requirement that the Office of Higher Education develop and maintain an affirmative action plan ensuring that CT higher education institution students, faculty, administrators, and staff are representative of the state’s racial and ethnic diversity. Eliminates requirements that this be reported on to the CGA and the Governor. This does NOT change the requirement that an affirmative action plan be prepared by each constituent unit for the CHRO and that the CHRO must report on that to the governor and CGA.

*Section 141* – Creates a program to be administered by DEEP to provide financial assistance to the MDC for the payment of costs associated with repairs and improvements to Hartford sewerage systems, prioritizing those that will mitigate or prevent flooding and back-ups within residential dwellings. “Each contract for any such repairs or improvements shall be executed in accordance with the provisions of section 4a-60 of the general statutes.”

*Sec 427 – 4a-60g(b)(1)*: Allows the signatory of the nondiscrimination affirmation provision in the contract to demonstrate understanding of their obligation by either (A) initialing the nondiscrimination affirmation provision, (B), providing an affirmative response in the required online bed or response to a proposal question that asks if the contractor understands its obligations, or (C) signing the contract.

*Sec. 433-437 Section 4a-100*: Increases relevant thresholds regarding prequalification from \$500,000 to \$1 million. Requires DAS to hold an annual training for the purpose of discussing state contracting requirements.

### **FEDERAL REVENUE:**

The CHRO has workshare agreements with both the Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For every complaint dual-filed with both the CHRO and either EEOC or HUD, the federal government remits payment to the CHRO to process and investigate the complaint on their behalf. To ensure fair and impartial processing, this money is not contingent on the outcome of the complaint. As a result of this arrangement, approximately 25% of the commission’s budget is covered by federal vouchers for case processing. This revenue is directly deposited into the General Fund. In FY 2023-2024, the CHRO contracted for \$1,125,955 from the EEOC for case processing and \$564,813 from HUD for case processing. An additional \$47,250 SEE Fund grant was received from HUD plus another \$25,000 Partnership Grant from HUD.

Diane Carter, Supervisor of the Fair Housing Unit continued to guide the unit to markedly improved performance by increasing the number of completed Housing investigations within the prescribed 100-day timeframe for the third year in a row. This obviously leads to increased revenue for the agency. But more importantly, it reflects enhanced services to the complainants who seek our services.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The Office of Public Hearings (OPH) conducts contested case proceedings in discrimination cases brought by the Commission and in whistleblower retaliation cases filed with the Chief Human Rights

Referee pursuant to CONN. GEN. STAT. § 4-61dd. The office is led by Chief Referee, Dr. Cherron Payne. Attorney Jon FitzGerald and Attorney Komla Montrevi (who was appointed in 2024) are the other two referees.

Chief Referee Payne reports the following statistics for the 2023-2024 program year:

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Final Decisions:            | 20         |
| Decertified:                | 4          |
| Stipulated Agreements:      | 41         |
| Motions to Dismiss Granted: | 9          |
| Summary Judgment:           | 1 (denied) |
| Withdrawals:                | 5          |
| Release of Jurisdiction:    | 6          |

Amount of judgment awards for FY 24: \$1, 089, 282.00.

There are currently 101 open cases.

## **REPORTS**

Annual reports required by statute including reports on the state of Affirmative Action in state agencies, the contract compliance program, agency case processing trends, and the awarding of attorney fees can also be found on our website. The reports can be accessed at <https://portal.ct.gov/CHRO/Commission/Publications/CHRO-Publications> under the “Publications” tab.

The executive director provides monthly productivity and status reports to the commissioners at every public commission meeting. The regions continue to demonstrate a large amount of activity around outreach events. Over 80% of the staff participate in some way in agency outreach and training activities. Regular and consistent staff meetings occur in every unit of the agency with attorney designation assignments to each unit for consistent application of laws and regulations.

Below please find the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities' statutorily required reports for submission to the Office of the Governor for 2024:

- [Annual Report to the Connecticut General Assembly and the Governor: Affirmative Action Plan Data Report \(CGA Sec. 46a-68\(f\)\)](#)
- [Annual Report to the Connecticut Judiciary Committee and Governor \(CGS Sec. 46a-82e\(b\)\)](#)
- [Annual Case Processing Report \(CGS Sec. 46a-56\(a\)\(4\)\)](#)

Below please find the CHRO's annual reports that are required to be submitted to the legislature under CGS 46a-68(f) and 46a-56(a)(6):

- [Annual Report on Affirmative Action FY 24](#)
- [Report on Contract Compliance and Small and Minority Owned Business Utilization FY 24](#)

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

The Commission takes seriously its responsibility to comply with the provisions of the state's Freedom of Information Act. The Legal Division is responsible for responding to all freedom of information (FOI) requests, except those received directly in a regional office requesting a file being processed by that office. The Legal Division also responds to subpoenas for documents and testimony related to agency procedures and documents. Support staff handles most requests; complex requests and hearings are referred to the Executive Director. The Executive Director ensures that all regular and special Commission meetings are properly noticed and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

Additional Information: Individuals seeking more information about the Commission, the laws it enforces, or its services and programs are encouraged to contact the Commission's website (<http://www.portalct.gov/chro>) or call our toll-free number (800) 477-5737.

### **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

During this reporting period, the Affirmative Action unit experienced significant changes in staffing. Its former supervisor, Neva Elaine Vigezzi, who retired after over 45 years of state service, remained with the agency as a TWR employee to provide the unit the necessary training and guidance to proceed. The Affirmative Action Unit staff analyzed thirty-seven state agency affirmative action plans. Of these, 32 were approved, one was conditionally approved, and four were disapproved. Additionally, 282 technical assistance sessions were conducted with state agencies via a combination of telephone, teams, email, or in-person throughout the fiscal year. Affirmative Action Unit staff are active participants in the agency's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee with our staff belonging to the DEI Survey Subcommittee, DEI Training Subcommittee, and the DEI Newsletter Subcommittee. The Affirmative Action Task force is meeting with the Office of Policy and Management on affirmative action plan regulation reform. The CHRO is assigned to the Department of Labor for HR and some administrative services. Through a memorandum of understanding, the EEO Manager, Jeri Beckford, is assigned to assist with the preparation of the Commission's Affirmative Action plan as well as conduct all internal investigations.

### **CONTRACT COMPLIANCE**

This unit is supervised by Alvin Bingham. Commission staff analyzed 906 affirmative action and set-aside plans submitted by contractors that were awarded public works and construction contracts. 543 plans were approved, 56 plans received violations, and 330 projects were closed out. Staff worked with contractors to cure plans for 307 disapproval reviews. Approximately 37 cases were referred to the Legal Division for further enforcement action. Staff instituted monthly, open-invitation compliance trainings for municipalities and continued to conduct monthly trainings for contractors. Staff conducted, in collaboration with the primary funding agencies, numerous grant-specific trainings. Daily, staff proactively reviewed the procurement documents for state and municipal projects (totaling many thousands over the course of the year). As a part of the unit's extensive, ongoing outreach to state agencies regarding public works grants and projects, staff worked collaboratively with 21 separate funding agencies to implement best practices for contract compliance on grant programs and expenditures. Staff regularly conducts hundreds of screener questionnaires to proactively alert grantees of the contract compliance requirements and to collect necessary project information. All the while, staff members conduct ad hoc outreach upon request. To incorporate revisions to the General Statutes, staff revised the several document templates and forms, the boilerplate nondiscrimination contract language, and public notice flyers that companies must post. The unit has housed the temporary employees assisting with the Disparity Study and Equity Study. To assist those studies, staff have provided exhaustive records.

### **Sexual Harassment Training**

CHRO continues to serve as a vital resource for training Connecticut employees about sexual harassment in the workplace and places of public accommodation. Commission staff answered hundreds of questions about the sexual harassment training mandate. Over one million have been trained since inception of the training. Over 165,150 people were issued certificates via our online training during 2023-2024, with hundreds of thousands who were provided this training directly by their employer.

<http://www.portalct.gov/chro>

### **Internal Training**

CHRO, through its legal department regularly provides extensive two-week legal trainings for new staff members. This past year there were 23 new hires. Legal division staff conducted numerous IT training and development sessions with agency staff; 2 full-day, agency-wide trainings were conducted with internal and external presenters in December 2023 and June 2024. The DEI Committee conducted several interactive sessions in addition to developing and collecting survey data on agency operations and activities. Following the survey, many recommendations were provided for consideration and implementation.

### **External Training**

CHRO, through consultation with its legal department, provided outreach and education to the public this year which included fair housing training and webinars funded by HUD grants, speaking at UConn Law events for students, CBA trainings, several cultural competency trainings.

### **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

During the 2023-2024 program year, the CHRO conducted extensive training on fair housing, sexual harassment and domestic violence laws that included the production of a public service announcements in English and in Spanish, and videos, and multiple live trainings and webinars. The CHRO outreach has been expanded throughout Connecticut reaching thousands of our Connecticut stakeholders with the purpose of educating them on their protected classes and our programs. Below you will find some of our highlighted efforts.

July 2023, Greater Hartford Jazz Festival the Commission on Human Rights provided a resource table for the three-day event. To inform the public of the services that are offered at CHRO and educate them on CT twenty-eight protected classes at the event. Over 5,000 thousand stakeholders attended this event.

August 2023, we partnered with the EEOC for the Hartford Pride/Concert held in the heart of the city. With over 7,000 thousand Connecticut's stake holders attending, we took the opportunity to educate and promote our programs.

September 2023, we celebrated our Veteran's by being present at the annual Stand Down event. We joined forces with many agencies and became a resource to educate and speak to the Veterans about their protected class.

October 2023, with the support of a FHAP-HUD grant we collaborated with El Show de Analeh and Univision, to run a 20-minute segment in Spanish on national origin discrimination and fair housing laws; the intent is to reach out to the entire Hispanic community in CT and advise them of the services provided by CHRO and HUD related to fair housing. Our housing unit saw a spike in intakes due to the information on Pet Companions.

November 2023 CHRO'S Film Premiere of One of Millions: The Story of Holocaust Survivor, Ruth Weiner. It premiered at Real Art Ways and over one hundred CT stakeholders attended. The film was created as a part of the CHRO's education and outreach efforts: teaching about injustices past and present being a crucial part of their mission to eliminate discrimination. As an extension of this project, different grade-level curriculums of discussion questions, activities, and more, are being built for schools across Connecticut to be used alongside the film. By providing quality, engaging material, the CHRO and participating organizations.

December 2023 CHRO collaborated with El show de Analeh to celebrate the holiday in the community. Over 200 attendees enjoyed the event, including many friends who came to see the wonderful performance put on by a diverse group of children. Engaging with the Hispanic community has been a huge success.

January 2024 Children's March for Peace and Bell Ringing Ceremony for unity in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We marched for unity, peace and hope to elevate the voices of our youth. We celebrated the power of our youth making a difference and uniting us all in love as we marched through the streets in Cheshire.

February 2024 Our Kids Court Academy Program kicks off KCA is a pipeline program to develop interest in youth regarding civil and human rights law. The focus of the program is civil and human rights law enforcement and social justice. The Program is designed to raise the social consciousness of youth regarding civil and human rights law in a series of one-hour sessions where students will explore the law through case review, or film review. The law is a powerful tool and learning will be guided by a social justice or civil rights.

March 2024 African American Women's Summit CHRO presented a workshop to over sixty New Haven's youth. **"Importance of Leveraging Your Voice" Workshop:** Empowering the next generation to shape the future they envision by equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to make their voices heard. The goal is to inspire and mobilize our youth towards positive social change.

April 2024 with the support of a FHAP-HUD CHRO presented a webinar for the CT stakeholders. In celebration of Fair Housing month, the webinar "Your Rights in Mortgage Lending and Fair Housing" educated the Connecticut stakeholders and practitioners on the State and Federal laws protect you from discrimination by your mortgage lender? In partnership with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, and University of Connecticut Professor Kristen Haseney, Esq.

May 2024, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, partnered with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and held the very first Community Access and Equity Fair at the State Armory in Hartford. This event offered the opportunity for the CHRO to present the findings and recommendations of the recently statewide [Equity Study](#) to the residents of Connecticut. We also invited State agencies and nonprofits in Connecticut to share their programs as a resource over eighty states, community and nonprofits participated.

June 2024, CHRO collaborated with the Juneteenth Coalition of Greater New Haven (JCGNH) for the second time to celebrate Juneteenth which is now recognized as a

Connecticut state holiday. Our purpose was to educate the Connecticut stakeholders on the meaning of Juneteenth which was widely known and celebrated among African Americans in Texas, who carried those traditions with them as they migrated north throughout the northeast in the early 20th century. But many Americans are still dimly aware of the holiday if they are familiar with it at all.

The Outreach Coordinator, Ana Mitchell also facilitated an ambassador program to provide the public information on employment discrimination, housing discrimination and our complaint process. Every unit at the CHRO participated and/or hosted many exciting events. The Commission partnered and collaborated with stakeholders to address housing discrimination and housing access, police accountability, trans-gender rights, medical disparities, etc. The Commission's education and outreach coordinator partnered with state Representative Geraldo Reyes to address housing issues in his district of the state.

### **TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

This committee is chaired by Attorney Jonathan Sykes. The committee is responsible for ensuring efficient and effective troubleshooting of IT related issues within the agency or, if necessary, through unit-specific elevation to DAS. The committee is also responsible for training staff on the use of technology, adoption of best practices, intra-agency IT security protocol development, and recommendation of technology purchasing. Each unit has at least one representative on this unit to ensure consistent and accurate application of all agency practices and procedures. Since his appointment as chairperson, Jonathan has led to many streamlined and improved procedures. He is currently leading an overhaul and update of our website.

### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

Since 2019, Attorney Jody Walker Smith has successfully chaired the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at CHRO. The Committee provides educational content via its Social Media Team and DEI newsletter. It has significantly increased the agency's online presence with a significant number of subscribers. You can find nearly daily posts to update the public about issues of public interest and how to access our services for assistance. The legal department weekly thought-provoking and critically important conversations about equity and discrimination law. The regional offices, Affirmative Action, Contract Compliance, and Fair Housing Units also contribute regularly to statewide efforts to increase diversity and inclusion through our work with schools, businesses, municipalities, stakeholders, and local chambers of commerce.

We can be followed at:

facebook.com/ctchro.

Instagram: @ct\_chro.

Website: <http://www.portalct.gov/chro>.

For more information about the CHRO Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, follow us at: [DEI.CHRO@ct.gov](mailto:DEI.CHRO@ct.gov).

Subscribe to our DEI Newsletter using [this form](#)