

**Minutes of the Cook County  
Commission on Human Rights – Open Session  
July 17, 2025 at 10:00 am**

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Location: 69 W Washington Street, Chicago, IL 60602  
22<sup>nd</sup> floor, Conference Room F

**Attendance:**

**Present:** Chair Sufyan Sohel, Vice Chair Gia Orr (Quorum of Commissioners physically present voted to allow to attend virtually due to employment exception), Commissioners Jack Block, Rev. Richard Tolliver and Amber Smock, Hedy Ratner, Pushkar Sharma, Michael Lapinski, Dr. Simone Griffin, DHRE Staff.

**Absent:** Commissioners Charles Isaacs and Shobana Verma.

***Open Session***

**A. Call to Order**

- Chair Sohel called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

**B. Statements by the General Public**

W.L. submitted a written comment to the Commission. \*Comment available at the end of the meeting minutes.

**C. Agenda Approval**

- A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Jack Block and seconded by Commissioner Michael Lapinski. The motion was carried by the following vote:
  - **Ayes:** Chair Sufyan Sohel, Commissioners Jack Block, Rev. Richard Tolliver and Amber Smock, Hedy Ratner, Pushkar Sharma, Michael Lapinski, Dr. Simone Griffin
  - **Nays:** None
  - **Absent:** Commissioners Charles Isaacs and Shobana Verma.

**D. Approval of the May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting Open Minutes**

- A motion to approve the May 5, 2025 regular meeting open minutes was made by Commissioner Jack Block and seconded by Commissioner Hedy Ratner. The motion was carried by the following vote:
  - **Ayes:** Chair Sufyan Sohel, Commissioners Jack Block, Rev. Richard Tolliver and Amber Smock, Hedy Ratner, Pushkar Sharma, Michael Lapinski, Dr. Simone Griffin
  - **Nays:** None
  - **Absent:** Commissioners Charles Isaacs and Shobana Verma.

#### **E. Commissioners' Updates**

- Commission Workgroups have been established. Three workgroups include Policy, Outreach and Paid Leave. Commission staff will follow-up with Commissioners about next steps for the workgroups.
- Commissioner Amber Smock shared information regarding the Disability Pride Parade taking place on Saturday July 26.

#### **F. Chair & Vice Chair Elections (Cook County Code 42-34(a)(4))**

- Chair Candidate(s):
  - Sufyan Sohel
- Vice Chair Candidate(s):
  - Gia Orr
- A motion to re-elect Sufyan Sohel as Commission Chair and Gia Orr was made and carried out by unanimous voice vote.

#### **G. Director's Report**

- Director King provided updates on FY25 Q3 with one-third of the quarter complete. Noting a trend, the number of cases pending at all stages has increased from the last quarter. 112 new inquiries, 32 new cases filed, 37 cases closed which is an increase from the 26 closed last quarter. 2 cases pending administrative hearings and one case resolved after an Administrative Judge filing. 3 cases settled thus far and the known settlement amount is \$1,482.
- Policy: Policy Analyst presented at the 2025 National Association of County and City Health Officials on the importance of coordinated labor enforcement efforts in Cook County. The Department of Human Rights and Ethics (DHRE) published the Equity Landscape Review report for Equity Fund Recommendation 6.3 that called upon DHRE to review County agencies and public-facing programs to identify and eliminate gaps in services and barriers that impede immigrants and refugees living in Cook County from fully accessing County Services. DHRE surveyed community partners and County programs and services with a focus on areas of language access, public resources, and digital equity. Policy Analyst shared the report conclusions and Director King moderated panel discussion in an Inclusive Bites Fireside Chat session for Offices Under the President that was held on July 10, 2025. The next step in the Just Housing Amendment Impact Assessment is the interview phase. Note that the Cook County Board of Commissioners voted on Item #25-1822 which is an amendment that would require the inclusion of gender, instead of sex, on County forms and documents, and more inclusive gender options. The Commission will continue to monitor internally to determine if procedural rules amendment is required.
- Outreach: One of the Outreach and Training coordinators provided updates on events and trainings attended to continue departmental efforts to spread awareness of Cook County Human Rights and Ethics ordinances and protections. Human Rights newsletter increased to 2,366 subscribers.

#### **H. National Origin Discrimination Guidance – Commission Review**

- Commissioners reviewed the National Origin Discrimination Guidance draft and provided feedback which included making updates to the footnotes and ensuring that the examples are more inclusive. Commission staff will make the changes as discussed and make guidance available to the public.

#### **I. Investigation Extension Request – Commission Review and Vote**

- A motion to approve Investigation Extension Request Nos. 2025E00307, 2025ESL00302, 2025PL00300, 2025PL00295, 2025PA00289, 2025H00287, 2025PL00285, 2025PL00283, 2025E00281, 2025PL00278, 2025E00265, 2024PL00262, 2025E00259, 2024PL00232, 2024PL00223, 2024H008, 2025PL00241, 2024PL00250, 2025PL00271, 2025PL0027, 2025PL00279, 2024H006, 2024E015, 2024PL004, 2025E00299, 2025ESL00301, 2025H00284, 2025PL00288, 2025PL00282, 2025PL00271, 2025H00276 with the amendment as discussed was made by Commissioner Michael Lapinski and seconded by Commissioner Jack Block. The motion was carried by the following vote:
  - **Ayes:** Chair Sufyan Sohel, Vice Chair Gia Orr, Commissioners Jack Block, Rev. Richard Tolliver and Amber Smock, Hedy Ratner, Pushkar Sharma, Michael Lapinski, Dr. Simone Griffin
  - **Nays:** None
  - **Absent:** Commissioners Charles Isaacs and Shobana Verma.

#### **Closed Session**

- A motion to move into the Executive Session for discussions as identified in the agenda was made by Commissioner Jack Block and seconded by Commissioner Michael Lapinski and carried out by unanimous voice vote at 10:51 a.m.

#### **Open Session**

- At 10:52 a.m. the Commission reconvened to Open Session.

#### **K. Voting Regarding Executive Session Items, if any**

##### **a. May 5, 2025 Regular Closed Meeting Minutes – Commission Vote**

- A motion to approve the May 5, 2025, Regular Closed Meeting Minutes was made by Commissioner Michael Lapinski and seconded by Commissioner Jack Block. The motion was carried by the following vote:
  - **Ayes:** Chair Sufyan Sohel, Commissioners Jack Block, Rev. Richard Tolliver and Amber Smock, Hedy Ratner, Pushkar Sharma, Michael Lapinski, Dr. Simone Griffin
  - **Nays:** None
  - **Absent:** Commissioners Charles Isaacs and Shobana Verma.

#### **L. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Jack Block, seconded by Commissioner Michael Lapinski and carried by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Commission staff.

\*Public Comment submitted by W.L.: "These complaints remain pending senior staff review. Once there is additional update, communication will be sent to you. since 2023, 2024H00094 2024H00085 2024CS00117. Corruption in ethics and control organizations in the Illinois judicial system is a serious problem that undermines public trust in justice and the rule of law. While there are no easy solutions to combat corruption, there are measures that can help address this issue and promote greater transparency and integrity in the judicial system."