

Statement of Ceylan Eatherton

It's an honor to be nominated by the President and considered by the Cook County Board of Commissioners for this appointment to the Cook County Commission on Human Rights. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be involved with an agency that is dedicated to protecting people from discrimination and to preventing further discrimination. As the daughter of Turkish immigrants, I am acutely aware that my opportunities, education and career have all been the result of the hard work of those before me to prevent discrimination based on gender and national origin. I cannot repay those who preceded me, but I am hoping for an opportunity, through the Commission on Human Rights, to help prevent and address allegations of discrimination for those who follow me.

Though I am relatively early in my career, my introduction to administrative justice is not. As an economics student at MIT, I was appointed to the Committee on Discipline. My interest sparked, I attended the University of Chicago Law School and worked on juvenile justice issues at the Mandel Legal Clinic. After graduating, I practiced as an attorney in the litigation department of Kirkland & Ellis LLP. While at Kirkland, I trained to become a mediator and then began practicing as such on a pro bono basis. My interest in mediation as a tool for providing access to justice and alternative dispute resolution led to a position at Loyola Law School where I teach several classes on mediation. In addition, I am a volunteer mediator, trainer and board member at Chicago's Center for Conflict Resolution. I also serve on the Illinois Access to Justice Commission Mediation Committee and set up my own mediation practice where I have mediated cases involving issues such as partnership disputes and divorce.

As a lawyer who has worked for the last 7 years as a mediator, I hope to bring my alternative dispute resolution experience to the Commission as an alternative or supplement to the agency's existing investigative and adjudicative tools. Mediation programs have helped to resolve the backlog of many categories of cases in Cook County including areas of foreclosure, employment discrimination, and guardianship. The Executive Director of the Commission and I hope that my involvement on the Human Rights Commission can help the agency to create a streamlined process whereby cases brought before the Commission can be resolved, where possible, through mediation before taking on all of the costs of the current adjudication-based model. I am eager to join my colleagues on the Commission in tackling these and other challenges of this important County agency.

Thank you for considering me for this position.