

February 9, 2009

Appropriation Committee Meeting for the Governor's
Proposal of Closing the CHRO Norwich & Waterbury
Offices - Budget Meeting

Good Evening Senators and Madam Chair,

My name is Lucia M. Leise. I am here to represent myself and my co-workers only. I am the Administrative Assistant for the Norwich Office of the CHRO. I have been with CHRO for 24 years. On Wednesday, February 4, 2009, I, along with my entire office, found out that we were being proposed by the Governor to be closed!! Along with the Norwich Office, our Waterbury Office, too, was on the proposed list. The CHRO is a civil rights agency that is free to the citizens of CT. We investigate complaints of discrimination. The CHRO is comprised of 103 people. We have 5 offices. Our Hartford office on Grand Street houses our Administrative offices-legal department, affirmative action/compliance unit, business office, etc. The other 4 offices are regional offices that house a regional manager, the investigators and the clerical staff. Our regional offices are in Bridgeport, Hartford (near the Administrative office) and the other 2 targeted for closure, Norwich and Waterbury. The Governor proposes we downsize 28 positions. This leaves the Commission with 75 positions left. The Norwich Office (called the Eastern Region) has 12 employees; 1 manager, 3 clerical and 8 investigators. Our geographical breakdown serves CT citizens basically east of the CT River. Woodstock, Westbrook, East Hartford, Stonington and Plainfield are just some examples. Our employers/respondents are EB, Pfizer, state agencies in our area, both casinos and Pratt & Whitney. These are just some of our big employers. We take in an average of 550 complaints a year, not to mention the cases we already have in our inventory from the previous year(s). Our intake calls have increased dramatically. On average, we take in 82 calls per month. Each and every person is given a returned phone call. The clerical staff takes the basic information and the investigative staff returns these phone calls within 1 to 2 business days. Our office is surviving on the staff we have now. If this office closes, it will have a direct impact on our citizens. The closest office will be in Hartford. Hartford will then inherit our 800 + cases in our inventory (plus their cases in their inventory). That means 12 people will be processing 1,600 cases + inquiry calls of an estimate of 1,968. This is unconscionable!! There is no way one office can handle the workload of 2. The citizens of CT will suffer! Along with a very slow and grime economy, laying off more people to be added to the unemployment line, will certainly not help build this country back up. Without jobs, there will be no spending and without spending, there will be more lay offs from the private sector. I beg you to take action on my behalf, my co-workers and the citizens of CT. Thank you.