

**Testimony of Jerome D. Levine
Nominee for Reappointment
Before The Executive and Legislative
Nominations Committee
April 13, 2010**

Good morning/afternoon, Co-chairpersons Senator Looney and Representative Janowski and distinguished committee members. My name is JEROME D. LEVINE and I am completing my first term as a Human Rights Referee in the Office of Public Hearings of the Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities.

I was honored to have been nominated by Governor M. Jodi Rell in 2007, when I first appeared before this committee and was confirmed. At that time, I thought I had a solid understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the job. I really did have an understanding of the procedures and some knowledge of the substantive law. When I began, I had a great deal of litigation and governmental agency experience.

What a difference three (3) years makes! In preparing for today's hearing, I analyzed the types of cases I have handled during my term. They include claims of racial, sexual, age and gender discrimination, claims of discrimination based on physical disability and the failure of an employer to make reasonable accommodations, claims of religious and national origin discrimination and claims of housing discrimination. I have handled a number of Whistleblower claims. I have had a number of successful settlements as a settlement referee. I have ruled on a number of procedural matters that are published on our website. I co-wrote and presented with Chief Referee Kerr a whistleblower skit as part of our inhouse agency training program. I have brought

the resources of the Commission to several nonprofit agencies. Now I feel that I have a much greater understanding of the substantive law and applicable procedure.

Recently, I was able to settle claims of national origin discrimination and sexual harassment against a mid-sized company in one lengthy session. All parties, including Commission counsel, who regularly appear in these matters, were active participants in the settlement process. They were responsive to a resolution of the claims in a timely manner, without the long delays, expensive fees and absence from productive work that a contested procedure or actual court proceeding entails. At the conclusion of the settlement conference, everyone thanked me for my efforts in facilitating a prompt resolution of the matter. A settlement also meant a substantial savings to the taxpayers.

Most of our cases settle along the litigation continuum. In my opinion, this is due to: (1) the efforts of the experienced lawyers who serve as Human Rights Referees; (2) the reality and risk that the parties face in trying a case; and finally, (3)the parties having to prepare for and actually prove their claims at a public hearing (trial).

Last year, one of my colleagues, Referee Thomas Austin, and I did research comparing our settlement statistics to those of the Judicial System. We learned that our settlement statistics were quite comparable to theirs.

I have enjoyed the legal work, the continual learning experience and the chance to make a difference. I have been honored and gratified to perform in this capacity.

Finally, I would like to publicly acknowledge the valuable help and support of my colleagues at the Office of Public Hearings (OPH).

Hopefully, some of my substantive legal knowledge has been of benefit to them and surely my sense of humor has benefitted them greatly.

I am respectfully requesting reappointment. Thank you for your time and attention.

Most Sincerely,

Jerome D. Levine