

**Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities**  
**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee**  
**Wednesday, February 23, 2011**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and member of the Appropriations Committee I am Bob Brothers executive director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

The Commission has made strides in a number of areas including outreach and education during the past year. I am particularly proud of our enhanced outreach and education work. These efforts have included informational sessions at different locations around the state. We are happy to have as co-sponsors the African American Affairs Commission, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Latino Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and the NAACP.

Topics have included how to prevent discrimination; who is protected by state anti-discrimination laws; how people can file a complaint with CHRO; interactive seminars between the community and police about how to better communicate and work together; and general community exposure. I must point out that many of these events are after work hours and on weekends and many staff have volunteered their own time to cover these events. This is one more reminder of the deep commitment we at CHRO have to equality and bringing an end to discrimination in all its forms.

In fact staff has done such a good job of getting the Commission better known that a documentary on Civil Rights done in conjunction with the Film School at Wesleyan University was first presented there just this past Sunday.

During the past fiscal year, the Commission received 1,971 complaint affidavits; 1,740 alleged discrimination in employment, 135 in housing, 79 in public accommodation and 17 in some other area. The greatest number of complaints alleged discrimination based on race (589), followed closely by color (527), sex (500), age (482) and physical disability (479). There were 162 complaints of sexual harassment.

The Commission closed 1,764 complaints, of which 588 were closed through no-fault agreements, conciliation or settlement. During FY 2010, \$4.9 million in known settlements or damage awards were paid to persons filing complaints. In addition, substantial damages were paid under confidential settlements to which the Commission was not a party.

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Regarding Governor Malloy's 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 budget proposals I feel a sense of relief and hope that, after having had the Commission decimated by Rell administration cuts year after year, we may have a period of stability. I believe Governor Malloy's proposals demonstrate his commitment to equality and the fight against discrimination while realistically acknowledging the dire fiscal condition of the state.

I would remind the Committee that the Commission has suffered a 25% reduction in staff under the previous administration's continuing assault on the enforcement of equality and anti-discrimination laws. Not only were our ranks disproportionately reduced compared to other state agencies, but for two years we have not been allowed to refill a single position.

As the result service to Connecticut citizens has suffered and we have not been able to close as many cases as have been opened. This is shown the Outcome Measure table at the bottom of page 208 of the Governor's Budget-in-Brief. Not only does justice go unserved, but in fiscal terms we lost approximately \$163,000 in federal reimbursement last year because of the cuts made in staffing by the previous administration. The evidence shows that previous budget cuts have not just gone to, but into the bone.

While I understand the fiscal pressures you and the Governor are under I must for the good of the people the Commission serves – minorities, women, those with disabilities and a host of other protected classes – state that I believe much of the drop in regional operations is the result of having the position of Director of Field Operations unfilled since the ERIP.

Thank you, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.