

Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities
Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing March 31, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Miner and member of the Appropriations Committee I am Bob Brothers executive director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities enthusiastically **SUPPORTS** HB 6595, An Act Concerning the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

You sent a clear signal that the Commission needed to find ways to perform its mission better and we heard you. While we have compensated for lowered staff to the best of our ability we need your help to make real strides in improving our case management process. Incredibly, the assistance we need not only does not require more money, it will save money!

Aside from the obvious money saving changes such as eliminating certified mail requirements, which you have in a hand-out that was provided to you by your excellent Committee Administrator Susan Keane, we are proposing a streamlined investigation process.

I would like to focus my time on Section 7 of the bill which would:

- Provide for an internal, automatic review of cases dismissed during the Merit Assessment Review process. This promotes efficiency, by establishing internal quality control which increases fairness in the process. We believe that this will also promote economy, as it will result in fewer appeals. And I hope fewer constituent complaints.
- The bill will make mandatory mediation conferences more productive and reduce time by including fact-finding conferences at the same time.
- If the case is not resolved by mandatory mediation the complainant, the respondent or the commission may request early legal intervention.
- Allow a complainant in a housing case to intervene as a matter of right in a civil action without permission of the court or the parties and allow that person's attorney to try the case in lieu of the CHRO or attorney general.
- Requires a complainant to state specifically why reconsideration should be granted. At present a request may be vague or not even state a basis for reconsideration. Wasted time and effort for all involved.
- Requires a complainant to state specifically why a reconsideration should be granted. At present a request may be vague or not even state a basis for reconsideration.

I urge your passage of the bill as written. I will in hindsight also thank you for pushing us into the future.

I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.