

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Edwin
Vargas

SENATORS: Formica

REPRESENTATIVES: Perillo, Davis, DiMassa,
Godfrey

REP. VARGAS (6TH): I am hereby calling the public hearing for the Executive and Legislative Nominating Committee Meeting. We have most of our members serving on multiple committees so they may be coming in and out as time permits. But in the interest of everybody's schedule and fairness in terms of time, we'll -- we'll get started. The - I'll ask that the clerk please read the safety instructions.

CLERK: In the interest of safety, I would ask that you note the location of and access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through you which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs.

In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go to your right and exit the building by the main entrance or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capitol Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so.

In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room and stay away from the exit doors until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The first order of business is a House Joint Resolution appointing the Honorable Donald S. Stein of Bark Hampstead to be a member of the Materials, Innovation and Recycling Authority. Will Mr. Stein please come to the front. If Mr. Stein is not here yet, we'll pass over him and go to Milan Chand of Newtown to be a non-voting student member of the State Board of Education.

And Milan, before you take the seat, would you please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

MR. MILAN: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated. What we usually do here is we allow the nominees to make an introductory statement. After the introductory statement, if any of the members of the Committee or if I have any questions, that's what we have an opportunity to ask questions of the nominee.

Then we, after all individuals have been interviewed by the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee, if there is anybody from the public that wishes to testify, you will have an opportunity to do so. And if we have any written communication about any of the nominees, we enter it into the record.

We also keep the votes open until 4 p.m. so that legislators that are busy in other committees and can't make this meeting have an opportunity to cast their vote. So, without further ado, this is a time for you to make your initial presentation so the floor is yours, Milan.

MR. CHAND: Thank you. Good morning Representative Vargas. My name is Milan Chand and it's an honor and privilege to be nominated as a student representative on the Connecticut State Board of Education by Governor Lamont. My sincere thanks to this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you and speak to my desire to serve on the State Board of Education as a student member.

I have lived in Newtown, Connecticut since I was in first grade and I am currently a senior attending Newtown High School where I will graduate from this June. Next fall, I plan on attending the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia studying neuroscience and possibly minoring in political science.

Throughout my four years in high school, I have been involved of many aspects of my school environment. From leading countless clubs to playing on two varsity sports and overall being an integral of the community. My parents have supported my academic success along the way and I have made so many connections with friends, teachers and other mentors.

But through it all, I have always had a motivated attitude and a vision for change. I have always felt compelled to improve the status quo. To improve my school, my community or my state.

Newtown, Connecticut is often associated with awkward pauses and glances of pity since the Sandy Hook shooting and residing there has always carried weight. Not only has our history left an impact on the world but has also created a prominent imprint on each of our lives. It has taught me how to fight

for change and how to demand action. But most importantly, it has allowed me to share my voice.

As an activist, I've worked with organizations like the Junior Newtown Action Alliance fighting for gun safety. As a community member, I have volunteered and lead non-profits like Families United in Newtown to support and advocate for special needs students. And as a researcher, I have interned at Yale University studying mental health disorders in children and I have worked with the ALVIO [ph] Foundation to create more brain health awareness in our nation.

So, as I fight in the realm of education now, I continue to seek a just world to better the lives of students, especially when it comes to mental health. Each avenue as immense value and allows me to serve as a voice. An ambassador for children, teenagers and young adults alike. My position has given me substantial ability to spearhead action through riveting discussions with the board.

Now only have I gained incredible experiences from this position but I have also learned a tremendous amount from my fellow board members who truly value my perspective. After several board meetings, a roundtable discussion with Governor Ned Lamont, a speech at the Teacher of the Year award ceremony and an overall contribution to shaping the lives of students, I can truly see the impact I have.

Therefore, I look forward to continuing my passion to change on the State Board of Education through my willingness to contribute my desire to embolden others and my motivation to always challenge the status quo. Because at the core of all my interests is a desire to help. Thank you so much for allowing

me to speak today and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, first of all, let me congratulate you on your appointment to the Board of the -- Board of Education in the State of Connecticut by Governor Ned Lamont. The whole idea of student participation on the Board was something that I supported many years ago and is something I think adds another dimension to our State Board of Education.

A youth and student perspective and looking, judging from your resume, you have quite a variety of interests, especially in science. I see that you like to work with kids that have special needs. As a member of the IDD caucus, I congratulate you on that.

MR. CHAND: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And I see that you like to travel.

MR. CHAND: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Can you mention a couple of the countries you've been to?

MR. CHAND: I've been to four continents, I think so far. My favorites by far definitely Austria and Hungary I went to. Awesome countries.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, they preserve a lot of the old medieval architecture there.

MR. CHAND: Yeah, definitely.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So, let me ask you. Your family originally hailed from India or where?

MR. CHAND: India, yeah. My parents were both from Delhi they came to the United States for medical school both of them in America and then moved to Wisconsin and then to Connecticut.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): That's where your interest in science comes from, your mom and dad.

MR. CHAND: Yeah, definitely. My parents are both doctors.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And I see you listed as one of your interests being a good conversationalist. And I can relate to that. As a young guy, I used to love to speak, especially to people older than me with more experience.

MR. CHAND: Yeah.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And you learn a lot from speaking to your elders.

MR. CHAND: Definitely.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And having long conversations on a variety of subjects. And you also said you were minoring in political science too?

MR. CHAND: I'm thinking about it, yeah.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, that's -- that must mean that you love history too.

MR. CHAND: Yeah, a little bit. Mostly the governmental kind of aspect of everything and coming here has definitely showed me a lot about it.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Very good. I was a teacher 35 years in the Hartford public schools and among the subjects I taught were American History, Civics, Geography and many of the same interests of reading,

travel. Maybe not as strong in the sciences as you but I was certainly in the liberal arts.

So, I congratulate you on the Governor's appointment and I know you'll do well. I know that your perspective will be well received by the other members of the State Board of Education.

We have a new Commissioner, as you know, Miguel Cardona is the new commissioner. We're very excited about new direction for our State Board of Ed. We still have an education gap with poor kids in the inner cities that we're trying to close.

MR. CHAND: Definitely.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Oh, one thing I always tell people that are going to serve on the State Board of Education is to slow down on the charter schools and start paying more attention to the neighborhood public schools.

After all, that's where over 90 percent of our kids are. And that's where a lot of the kids that have the limited English, poverty issues, that's where a lot of the kids that have the learning disabilities and all the problems are concentrated in those neighborhood public schools. And they need all the help they can get.

MR. CHAND: Exactly.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So, we have enough charter schools. The charter schools, you know, I originally supported them because we wanted to them to be like an urban lab. We could try new teaching methodologies that we could then use in our public schools.

But unfortunately, it started growing into a system of its own and -- at this point. I've had conversations with some people that actually now look down on the public schools instead of seeing themselves as role models and leaders for the public schools. They start seeing themselves as an elite group and I think that's the wrong direction.

So, anyway I congratulate you. Before I let you go, there's a question that we ask of all nominees. Is there anything at all in your background that you believe might prove embarrassing to the Governor, to this Committee, to the State of Connecticut?

MR. CHAND: Nope.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much.

MR. CHAND: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): All right. That brings us to our next nominee. Ms. Sophia Chin of South Windsor to be non-voting student member of the State Board of Education. Sophia, before you take your seat, please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell me the truth and nothing but the truth?

MS. CHIN: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated. This is a public hearing, I don't know if the camera is on but sometimes the camera is on and they tape these and sometimes they pass them through the Government Access Channel. So, just to let everybody know who's here. And I, at this point, will allow you to make your initial -- your initial presentation introduction.

MS. CHIN: Thank you. Good morning Representative Vargas. My name is Sophia Chin and it is an honor

and privilege to be appointed by Governor Lamont. I sincerely thank this Committee for the opportunity to speak before you on my desire to serve on the Connecticut State Board of Education.

I am proud to be a bi-racial young woman and draw inspiration from the extraordinary woman who have shaped my heritage. My paternal grandmother came to this country from Hong Kong by herself working in a factory at 20 years old to bring her four siblings and parents over into greater opportunities.

My mother and her mother sought political asylum here from remaining communism in 1990 with less than 100 to start a new life. As a high school and college student, my mother worked three jobs and joined the United States Army Reserves where she served until 2001.

Now what I can do with these success stories is take these traits of perseverance and hard work and strive to fulfill my entire potential end goals. I have lived in South Windsor for as long as I can remember. I'm a product of South Windsor public schools where I received outstanding academics and a local parks and recreation department for my love of tennis.

Throughout my life, I have been involved in public programs and activities. And I believe this is the reason I enjoy public service activities such as the State Board of Education and my long term community service projects.

Specifically, I have been giving back to the same town tennis program which nurtured me and gave the training to accomplish recognitions. Such as being a two-time undefeated and all conference player, an

all-state player and a varsity captain for this upcoming season.

My gratitude to South Windsor's town tennis program had yielded over 250 hours of service towards instructing Kindergarten through 9th grade students and fostering their love for the sport just like me.

I am also actively working with the American Red Cross as a donor ambassador in which I travel across Connecticut volunteering at blood drives to ensure a smooth donation process and encourage donating blood to save more lives.

I have brought this into South Windsor High School with my hosting of three blood drives per school year to inspire the next generation of blood donors who will hopefully get into the habit of donating blood and make a lifelong commitment to our community.

As a student leader, my favorite club is Model United Nations where I served as the club president, won two state level awards and participated in an international competition at Harvard. I owe my public speaking ability and confidence to share opinions all to this club and have certainly influenced my interest in this board position and my future endeavors.

This fall, I plan to begin a course of study in international business and political economics with a goal of continuing to law school after completing my undergraduate studies.

Serving on the State Board of Education these past few months has certainly affirmed my interest in law and policy. Simply having the opportunity to participate in discussions which shape the education

opportunity of this many students is certainly unparalleled.

I have already learned an immense amount which I bring back to my home town in attempt to see development on the micro level. I can see the passion for helping students in each board members eyes and it encourages me to continue sharing my perspectives. Because I know my words are being processed and hopefully used to take action.

As I see it, my time served on this board must not involve me keeping quiet or being there to observe. Rather, always being the voice next to these game changing figures in education to remind them of the little things they might see -- they might not see as adults but are still important to take into account.

It is my hope for my time serving on the State Board of Education that my fellow board members remember the perspectives I give and that my perspectives are worthy of remembering. It would mean the absolute world to me if an esteemed board member were to be in a committee session working hard to produce a policy for students across the state and use my words to make it happen.

This is all I can hope for and is the reason why I eagerly wish to do more to help my community and more across Connecticut. Thank you for allotting time to hear me today and I would happily take any questions or comments.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much, Sophia, for your introductory statement. Just like our previous nominee as a student representative of the State Board of Education, you have quite a

background. I'm sure you're going to do very well. I want to congratulate you on Governor Ned Lamont's appointment of you to the -- as a student representative of the State Board.

And as a former educator, I'm always happy to see young people so involved and I want to thank you for all your community service with the Red Cross and with young people. And I can see from -- from your background and your resume that you're very interested in healthcare issues. Are you planning on being a doctor?

MS. CHIN: Actually, no. I'm planning on going into international business and political economics. But I'm planning on going to law school after so many some sort of health care law is in the works for me.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Very good. And I can see, just like our previous nominee, that you have an interest on international issues.

MS. CHIN: I do, yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And have you done some traveling too?

MS. CHIN: I have. I've been to Romania a lot because that's where I have a lot of family and also Germany. I have family all over Europe so we go there quite often to see them but also see how things work in different countries that's different to America.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): That's wonderful. I always believe that nominees that have that international perspective add something extra in their roles serving on boards and commissions. A less insular, you know, isolationist view of the world.

The -- I see that you're also employed by Trader Joe's whose founder just passed away recently.

MS. CHIN: Yeah. The whole store was really sad to hear it and we actually did a bunch of tributes to him.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, there is one thing on your resume, one organization that I wasn't too -- too familiar with and that's the National Junior Classical League. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MS. CHIN: Oh yeah. So, that is, I take Latin as a foreign language at my high school. And the National Junior Classical League is the National Honor Society for the classics. So, ancient Greek and Latin are the main studies that we do there.

So, since I am the president of that society, my job is to make sure that more students are enrolling in Latin. Because it's a really good language to learn. While it may not be spoken but it helps you with a lot of root words and also understanding grammar and structure.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, then it goes without saying that like the previous nominee, you have an interest in history.

MS. CHIN: I do definitely.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And with your background in Latin, I guess you can read a lot of these classical pieces in the original.

MS. CHIN: Hopefully, eventually yes. Right now, we're learning a lot of ancient text so not really applicable to the more modern Latin that we may see.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, it's wonderful and I congratulate you again on Governor Ned Lamont's appointment of you to the State Board of Education as a student representative. And I think you'll bring a great perspective to that Board.

MS. CHIN: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): I want to -- I have to ask you the question I ask of all nominees at this point. Is there anything in your background that you believe might prove embarrassing to the State of Connecticut, to the Governor or to this Committee?

MS. CHIN: No.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, then thank you very much and congratulations again. That brings us to Mr. Andrew Norton to be a member of the Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities. Mr. Norton, would you please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

MR. NORTON: I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated. We've been joined by Representative DiMassa from the great town of West Haven. Is there anything you'd like to say, Mr. DiMassa, before we continue?

REP. DIMASSA (116TH): No, please Mr. Chair, continue. It's an honor to be here. Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative DiMassa. I was feeling kind of lonely here for a while. As is customary, we'll allow Mr. Norton to make his initial comments.

MR. NORTON: Thank you, Chairman Vargas and Representative DiMassa. And thank you for the time

and attention you're offering me here today. I want to say that I am very pleased and honored that Representative Klarides put my name forward for this position.

Although I will make clear that I already do serve on the Commission, having been appointed or nominated by Representative Ferraro and Representative Ward. And I have enjoyed my time and found it to be fruitful as serving on the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

It is a unique state agency. There are sort of two types of state agencies that the legislature has designed to be overseen not by the Governor. One, of course are our educational authorities. Boards of Trustees, the State Board of Education are where the Governor's influence is indirect.

And then, of course, the State Elections Enforcement Commission, FOY, Ethics and CHRO which have a job of overseeing state government significantly. And so, it's thought that there should be some remove in the oversight of those agencies.

And as the nine members of our commission, although I believe there is a vacancy, we serve that roll of representing the interests of the citizens of the state and running an agency. Although I will say, it's a volunteer task, we meet monthly. So, it is the work of executive director Hughes, deputy director Sharp to really run the agency. We do have a roll of oversight and policymaking and I enjoy that.

I think the fact of the matter is that it's quite an honor that in Connecticut, our Human Rights Agency is, we believe the oldest in the country dating from

1943. Don't listen to what New Jersey says. And we're proud of that and proud of that long history of work.

But there are, in essence, three or four areas where our work is done. One, people can come to us with a complaint that they have suffered discrimination. Mostly they do that in an employment setting but it also can be public accommodation. It can be housing and to a lesser extent, credit. But that's the fourth area that a complaint can be brought under.

We also oversee all state agencies affirmative action plans. They come to us every year. If they're an agency of over 250 employees, every other year if they're smaller than that. And it's a rigorous process, one that requires a lot of labor.

The end result is meant to be that state agencies are careful to make sure when they hire. They are considering people's value and not necessarily their race or their gender. Or if anything, to pay some extent to the fact that a particular race or gender may be unrepresented in a job class. And to lean in in a direction of making sure the work force represents the diversity of the population and the population of the available workers.

It's a rather complicated mathematical thing and it can trip agencies up because it requires some real expertise. But our agency is there to help them pass through those obstacles. So, one discrimination, two state agency affirmative action, three contract compliance. One of the areas of the state government and legislators such as yourself have decided is worthwhile is to try to make sure people who get a lot of money from the state as

contractors also buy into a world of affirmative action and diversity promotion.

And we have a unit which runs through those contracts trying as best we can to work collaboratively with large contractors to make sure they're doing everything they can to hire and to reach out for those folks.

Apart of that is another part of the laws that you've enacted which is business promotion for small businesses and minority owned businesses. And as you may know, in these contracts it is pushed that 25 percent of the work go to small businesses. And that 25 percent of that which now becomes 6.25 percent be given to people who are minority or women.

And so, there is contract compliance efforts to again, broaden the ability of people in areas that may not have always been successful in our society to be successful with the large state contracts.

And then lastly, outreach and education. And that's an area I do want to take time to commend our current leadership, executive director Hughes and deputy director Cheryl Sharp. They have done great work in raising the profile of CHRO, making it known throughout the community, especially the communities of interest in diversity, in discrimination.

By doing seminars and lectures and most recently they are the ones who have taken on the task of creating sexual harassment training videos. As the legislature, in its wisdom, decided that more and more people throughout the workforce of Connecticut should learn about sexual harassment and learn about how bad it is.

CHRO is taking a lead role in educating the public about sexual harassment. And again, in particular, providing training for employees at every level in sexual harassment.

I'm very pleased to be part of the group. I've served with a variety of different commissioners from all four corners of the state and from all genders, all races and it has been an exciting experience for me. And I hope you'll do me the honor of moving me along to continuing to serve. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Representative DiMassa.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, it's always a pleasure to have a former member of the Connecticut General Assembly before us. And maybe it's because we know how difficult it is to serve up here on so many different issues and so many different committees that I believe people serve here bring a wealth experience to any position they hold.

So, and I also notice in your resume that you have a UConn law degree. We just finished with a bunch of UConn trustees.

MR. NORTON: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Interviewing a whole bunch of them, including the new chair of the Board, Mr. Dan Toscano who I believe is going to be great. And, of course, I'm a UConn women's basketball fan so.

MR. NORTON: Oh, I didn't realize they had a basketball program as well. That's good to hear.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yeah, isn't that great. And they rarely disappoint. And that's important for me because as a kid that grew up in Brooklyn, New York

and saw the Dodgers to go LA then came to Hartford and saw the Whalers go to North Carolina.

MR. NORTON: That hurt.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Professional sports have been very disappointing. At least the college is going to stay here, right?

MR. NORTON: I did attend UConn law at nights while I was in the legislature. And some of those classes were near the end of session and I had to miss a bunch of them. But I got a better grade in the classes I missed, I don't know what that means.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, maybe your reputation preceded you with those professors and they were appreciative.

MR. NORTON: I tried to keep it a secret.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Very good. And I see my friend Joanne from -- who is the legislative advocate for UConn is here too. You were here when we introduced, when we were interviewing the two student representatives for the Board of Education.

MR. NORTON: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): It seems like Connecticut has a bright future. I've got to say that I've got to congratulate you on your reappointment by minority leader, Representative Klarides. And the person you mention you initially appointed you Representative Carpino and I were together last night.

MR. NORTON: Oh, good.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Honoring, well the retirement of our former speaker, Chris Donovan from Meriden.

MR. NORTON: Oh, good.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): There was a little soiree for him last night. And Representative Carpino was very nice in speaking about how they work collaboratively and in a bipartisan way and got a lot accomplished, so.

MR. NORTON: I enjoyed my service and part of that was working with and representing along with people like those like Chris and Larry. They were good and distinguished members.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And of all the committees that you worked on, real estate, public safety, energy, revenue and bonding, the only one that I see an overlap was environment which I have the pleasure of serving on. And the issues are probably still the same. I tell people, there is only three minor problems. We polluted the air, the water and the food supply.

MR. NORTON: And bow hunting.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Once we can resolve those three minor issues we'll be in good standing. Anyway, I'm very happy with your reappointment. I don't have any questions. Representative DiMassa?

REP. DIMASSA (116TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Norton, I just want to thank you for your extensive career in public service in Connecticut. Whether it was with Norwich Hospital or in the legislature and certainly now with DORS. Are you still with that?

MR. NORTON: Yes. Although last fall our name changed, changed to Aging and Disability. But thank you, sir.

REP. DIMASSA (116TH): Absolutely. Thank you very much and I look forward to watching you continue to serve the state. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. NORTON: Thank you very much, Representative.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative DiMassa. You know, I was reading about, you know, the department that you're the legislative advocate for. And I always thought those functions were DSS functions. Is there just an overlap on those?

MR. NORTON: Well, I'll say that in 2011 when Governor Malloy was executing his vision for consolidating state agencies. He pulled the separate agency services for the blind, the separate agency commission for the deaf and the piece of DSS, rehabilitation services, and assembled a new agency. So, you're not wrong to be thinking that some of what we do was done by DSS.

Then, last -- two -- a year and a half ago, the legislature in its wisdom thought that the department on aging should once again not be on its own but be part of a larger agency. And since they did a lot of the same kind of work for people who may be in a shadow of life and need a leg up, that aging became part of our agency. So, a good bit of what we do was once done I DSS. You're exactly right.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): [off mic]

MR. NORTON: And my part of the state.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And your part of the state.

REP DIMASSA (116TH): Plus, somebody has really got to grill this guy, you know.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So, would you care to say something before we let him off the hook?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): No, I wouldn't. I just as, you know, Andy has been a long time support of the State of Connecticut. And I'm sure in his capacity, he will continue to do so. So, thank you for your service.

MR. NORTON: Thank you, Senator.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Formica. And before I let you, the question we ask of all nominees, is there anything in your background that you believe might prove embarrassing either to the Governor, to the State or to this Committee?

MR. NORTON: Embarrassing to me but no, not to any of them.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Okay. Well, we have some people say maybe their golf game might embarrass the state.

MR. NORTON: [laughter] Thank you, Mr. Chairman, no.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you and congratulations again. And that brings us to the final nominee, Neeta Vatti to be a member of the Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities. Neeta, before you take a seat would you please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

MS. VATTI: I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated.

MS. VATTI: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And as is customary, the floor is yours for your initial introductory remarks.

MS. VATTI: Thank you very much. Good morning, Representative Vargas, Representative DiMassa and Senator Formica. It's a pleasure to be here this morning. My name is Neeta Vatti. I am honored to be appointed to the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities by president pro tempore Senator Martin Looney.

It is my privilege to be before you today to share my background and explain my interest in serving on this Commission. I have lived with my family in Cheshire for approximately 15 years. My husband, Dave, is a federal prosecutor. I am the proud mother of two sons, currently a junior in college and a senior in high school.

I was born in Mumbai, India. When I was two years old, my parents made the bold and courageous decision to leave their families to search for a better life for my sister and me. They left with very little money and in a hope of eventually reaching the United States. A country they had heard offered boundless opportunities to those who were willing to work hard regardless of gender.

The seven year arduous journey took us through Tanzania, Toronto and Vancouver where I first recall experiencing race based discrimination. When I was 9, we reached our final destination, West Hartford, Connecticut where we began a new journey of attempting to assimilate into our surroundings while retaining our heritage and culture.

Despite their initial struggles to make ends meet, my parents sent whatever money they could to help their families in India. With their consistent generosity, they humbly helped countless others over the span of their lives.

Now 84 years old after retiring many years ago, my father still uses his civil engineering background to teach math and physics and an adjunct faculty member at the University of Hartford.

My mother, at the age of 80, spends countless hours volunteering in the neonatal and pediatric ICUs of the Connecticut Children's Medical Center as well as serving as a literacy support volunteer at a local elementary school.

My parent's commitment to hard work and dedication to persevere in the face of obstacles have served as a model for how I live my life. Considering it my duty and responsibility to help others, and doing my part to give back is inherent in who I am and how I was raised.

Over many years, I've had the great opportunity to volunteer in numerous efforts. I have been an active member and leader in my children's schools' PTAs as well as several other charitable organizations, groups and events in my community.

I recently completed a four year term on my town's Board of Education where I served for two years as chair of the policy committee. I am currently the co-chair of the Connecticut Bar Association's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and have been a member of various other professional organizations.

I have served as a neutral court appointed arbitrator and special master in the Bridgeport superior court helping parties reach settlement and making decisions on outcomes when settlement discussions failed.

I'm a graduate in the University of Connecticut and Albany Law School. I practiced in civil litigation

for approximately 20 years and represented clients as both plaintiffs and defendants. I have worked for large companies, medium and small law firms and ran my own law practice for several years.

Recently, in mid-January, I left the private practice of law to begin a new position as legal counsel and policy analyst for the Senate Democrats here in General Assembly.

The decision to join the General Assembly was guided by my desire to help make a difference in the lives of the residents of our state. In addition to my work here, I am currently working in my fifth year as assistant director of professional and career development at the Quinnipiac University School of Law.

My varied legal practice has strengthened my ability to understand different perspectives and work towards creative solutions. I would be greatly honored to serve as a member of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

The underlying foundation and mission of the Commission to eliminate discrimination and help ensure equality for all residents aligned with the core principles to which I am firmly and personally committed.

I've had the pleasure of serving on this commission on an interim basis since September 2019. I have attended four meetings in a non-voting capacity and completed the required training. I sincerely thank executive director Tonya Hughes and deputy director Cheryl Sharp for their support and leadership.

Their dedication to outreach, not only in educating state residents of their rights and responsibilities

but also by engaging in community dialogue in an effort to bridge gaps has been truly commendable.

It is my hope that my diverse personal and professional experiences might help advance the goals of eliminating discrimination through human and civil rights law enforcement and establish and equal opportunity and justice for all within the state through advocacy and education.

It would be a privilege to serve to help further these and the other goals of the Commission. Should I be confirmed, I pledge to give careful thought and consideration that come before us and to use sound and independent judgement in all decision making. Thank you for your time and consideration.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much, Ms. Vatti. It's great to have a person with your background serving on the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. And I noticed you were involved in local municipal politics on the Board of Education of Cheshire in the greater Waterbury area.

And I see that you have extensive background in law and you're a lawyer that you've done arbitration. I've had experience with that when I was president of the Hartford Federation of Teachers, mostly labor management types of arbitration. But it's something that's really needed. I believe arbitration keeps our court calendars less clogged, right? They're pretty backlogged anyway but without that it would be much worse.

MS. VATTI: Absolutely.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And I thank you for your service on literacy issues and all the other things that you do. And I also, you mentioned that your parents

came from India. I love the international perspective and you were here probably when we interview the student representative who's also from India.

MS. VATTI: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Makes us very proud that we've had a lot of people from -- from India infusing into our professional life. I know a lot of the doctors and physicians at Hartford Hospital where I served on the Board of Directors for a while, we have many doctors that have come from India. And it has really enriched the State of Connecticut.

And also added that immigrant perspective which we need to really keep our country young and vital. So, I can't think of a better person. And you and the previous nominee to CHRO was equally qualified. So, I believe our board is well-served.

The only question I have is what do you see in terms of issues for CHRO in the future?

MS. VATTI: So, I'm -- I'm pretty new, I'm learning. I'm learning what's happening and that's what I'm trying to do first is try to assess everything. I have to say that I really hand it again, to director Hughes and deputy director Sharp. They have done an amazing job with the outreach effort as Commissioner Norton had mentioned too.

And I think what they're doing in moving that forward is just a tremendous way to proceed with any government. Instead of trying to penalize those that may not be following the law they're really trying to take that proactive approach to say, all right what can we do to educate you so you know what your rights and responsibilities are.

And what can we do to help each other and what can we do to help you so you are well-informed and just having those dialogues. So, I think continuing along those lines, they've done a tremendous job, I've been really impressed with that.

I know also there's always been talk about a backlog and I know they're working on that as well. They're trying to look into hiring a new magistrate or get that going as well. So, I know those issues are on there forefront and I'm sure they're going to continue to look and move those forward.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Just one more -- one more question I have.

MS. VATTI: Yeah.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): One of the frustrating things about CHRO was the -- that sometimes it seemed that some of the people that were not respecting some of our laws in terms of the anti-discrimination turned out to be some of our own state agencies. I hope that picture has improved.

You know, because we thought oh well the private sector, they're not as well versed in terms of what needs to be done and that then to make sure that there's non-discrimination in the workplace. But when you find out that some of the complaints are coming from in house, that really is bothersome.

MS. VATTI: And again, I think that education is key there. Communication, educating, letting everyone know what their duties are. What are your goals and what can you do. And I think the office too, it really tries to help out. If you're having issues, like let us know, how can we help you.

And that's what we've been hearing a lot from both of these leaders. So, that's been great to hear. I know they're trying to really get the information out there. And I don't think that anyone is doing anything intentionally. Like I said, I'm new so I've just been really trying to observe and listen.

And I think some of the issues that have come up even like with affirmative action plans and I think it's been what we've heard is maybe lack of people that are applying and they can't find a talent pool. But some of the agencies are really taking steps to make the pipeline greater and they're -- they're going out there to try to make a difference too, so.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you. And I hope when you come for, I know you'll be serving, this is a three year term, is that correct?

MS. VATTI: Yes, it is.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So, when you come back three years from now hopefully, you'll bring us an even more experienced perspective of what's going on. And I know that the Commission will be better off for having -- for your having served on it. And thank you also for helping us here in the Connecticut General Assembly as serving as Senate staff for the Democrats.

And, by the way, Senator Looney who is the appointing authority and president pro tempore of the Senate is also one of the leaders of this Committee together with Senator Duff. And as you know, all of our committees are bicameral committees. Anyway, that concludes my questions. Any questions from either Senator Formica or

Representative DiMassa? Representative DiMassa, you have the floor.

REP. DIMASSA (116TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank you for your service. Chairman Vargas pointed out but I just wanted to say, the only issue I have is, you know, all the good policy comes out of the House and not the Senate but I guess we can let that pass. We'll let you work for the Senate but thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. VATTI: [laughter]

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative DiMassa. Senator Formica? Okay, if there are no further questions or remarks by Committee members, I want to thank you again for your willingness to serve and your appointment by president pro tempore, Senator Looney to serve on the CHRO. And before I let you go, there's one question I ask of all nominees. Is there anything in your background that you feel might prove embarrassing to the State of Connecticut, to the General Assembly or to this Committee?

MS. VATTI: No sir.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much.

MS. VATTI: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And now did the Honorable Donald Stein come in or no? Okay, so we'll have to hold him for a future date. And that concludes the interviews. Is there any member of the public that wishes to speak? Madam Clerk, is there any written communication regarding any of the nominees? If not, that concludes the public hearing. (Gavel)