

CITY OF CHICAGO – Chicago Commission on Human Relations

2025 Budget Hearing

November 7, 2022

Nancy Andrade, Commissioner

Honorable Chairman Ervin and Honorable Members of the City Council Committee on the Budget and Government Operations:

On behalf of the Board of Commissioners and staff, I hereby submit the following statement in support of the Mayor's 2025 Budget Recommendation for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR).

As the civil rights enforcement agency for the city, we investigate and adjudicate complaints of discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, public accommodations, and credit. We also mediate conflicts between individuals and groups and assist victims of hate crimes. Through this work, we help to make workplaces free from discrimination, remove unlawful barriers to housing opportunities, and protect the rights of all Chicagoans to have access to the many great amenities of our city. Knowledge is power, so our work emphasizes educating the public about their rights. CCHR's workshops and presentations serve to reduce discrimination and fight the darkness of hate. We shed a light of hope to those who reach out to us in their quest for justice, closure, and healing when confronted with bigotry and hate.

For more than thirty years, the CCHR has advocated for and assisted victims of hate crimes pursuant to the hate crimes provisions of the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance. In January of this year, an amendment to the ordinance took effect which expanded the hate crimes section to include a new prohibition against hate incidents. A hate incident is defined as a "a non-criminal act motivated by bias against someone's race, color, gender identity, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, or sexual orientation." Victims can now report hate incidents to 311 which allows the Police Department and the CCHR to track these incidents and look for patterns of potential hate crime activity.

In June 2024, the CCHR released its first ever Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents Report which we presented to the City Council Committee on Health and Human Relations on June 27, 2024. The report provides an overview of the CCHR's activities regarding hate crimes and hate incidents as well as findings and recommendations to reduce and eliminate hate crimes and incidents. In August, the CCHR reinstated the successful "Think Before You Hate Campaign" with ads strategically placed on CTA buses, trains, and in transit stations.

In addition to our hate crime work, CCHR's Adjudication Division has been conducting community outreach throughout the year on various fronts educating the public about the Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances. Adjudication has delivered quarterly presentations to the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) on how the CCHR helps those with disabilities and conducted on-site complaint intakes with our investigators at the MOPD Field Office. During Fair Housing Month (April), as well as the week of Labor Day, our Adjudication team provided presentations at the Mexican Consulate about the city's discrimination laws. Additionally, the CCHR collaborated with the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA) to advise the CHA on how to improve and market its "Choose to Own" home ownership program for those with housing choice vouchers. We are excited about working with the Office of Reentry and are giving presentations at the DFFS Re-entry centers to inform returning residents of their rights in employment under the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance.

We would not have been able to accomplish some of these initiatives without the addition of two new members of our team; a Public Relations Representative and a Project Coordinator. Our Public Relations Representative, Alexander Chaves, serves as the public voice for our agency. He produces marketing materials and manages the Commission's social media presence. Alexander will be spearheading future marketing campaigns as well as a new podcast for the CCHR. Our Project Coordinator, Yaritsa Perez expands our capacity to conduct outreach and education programs for the community. She is currently developing and facilitating workshops, including workshops for new arrivals as a proactive approach to combat discrimination. Additionally, we are delighted and honored to have an influx of interns. The interns provide invaluable insight to the team by collecting and managing data regarding hate crimes and discrimination complaints.

As our nation continues to grapple with heightened levels of polarization and division, the CCHR remains committed to reducing discrimination and hate in Chicago, to being a beacon of light, and making equity a guiding principle in our planning for 2025 and beyond. Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully,

Nancy Andrade
Chair and Commissioner