

October 25, 2023

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 2024 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 mediate conflicts between individuals and groups and assist victims of hate crimes. We provide educational programs to reduce discrimination and fight the darkness of hate. Our work sheds 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. We promote safety for Chicagoans by enforcing the housing discrimination laws and expanding the sexual harassment ordinance; a safe dwelling and safe place of employment are the root of overall safety. Our work emphasizes education to let the public know that they have rights, for knowledge is power.

2023 has been a busy year for the CCHR. In response to an increase in hate crimes both nationally and locally, one of our goals this year has been to work across the city's diverse communities to bring people together to take a stand against hate. Our first initiative in this regard was the CCHR Unity Brunch which was held in January. The event brought together leadership from across the city to promote equity and combat hate, discrimination, and prejudice. We followed this up with our Unity Summit in August, which was developed to foster dialogue and collaboration among different segments of Chicago's diverse population to address prejudice, discrimination and hate.

While it has been very helpful to hear from the city's leadership, the CCHR is also looking forward to hearing directly from residents about these important issues. To do so, we will be launching a Racial Equity Listening Campaign for targeted communities on the South and West sides to learn how the Commission can better serve residents in these areas.

In addition to these programs, the CCHR continued to inform and educate the public about discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Through our "Report Discrimination" campaign, the CCHR placed ads on CTA buses, trains, and in transit stations beginning in November 2022 through January of 2023. The campaign was a huge success as our new complaint filings have increased by 86% as of September 30, as compared to the same period in 2022.

While fighting discrimination through the investigation and adjudication of complaints is the primary method by which the CCHR seeks to discourage discrimination, we also work with the mayor and City Council to strengthen and develop new laws to prevent discrimination. In 2023,

we worked to pass the Bodily Autonomy Ordinance introduced by Alderpersons Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, and Matt Martin. The ordinance protects the reproductive rights of people coming to Chicago to receive these services as well as gender-affirming care. We are also working with Ald. Andre Vasquez, Jr. and our city colleagues in the Mayor's Office, Human Resources, and Law to implement the Self-Identification of Gender Identity Ordinance initially introduced Ald. Vasquez to ensure that documents used in the ordinary course of business respect and accurately reflect the gender identity of Chicago residents seeking city services and our employees.

Finally, with the support of the mayor, we are excited to have filled several much-needed positions, including a Public Relations Representative which we have not had on staff for more than 20 years. We were also delighted and honored to have an influx of talented youth join us this year. In the spring, we served as a host for an international fellow from Peru who learned about our discrimination complaint filing process for the public, and our work to protect the rights of the LGBTQ+ residents. In addition, we are grateful to have hosted a talented group of college interns this year, all from the Chicagoland area representing Loyola University and the University of Toronto.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to announce that the CCHR and the Chicago Police Department were recently awarded a \$400,000 grant by the Department of Justice to implement a new Hate Crime Reporting Pilot Program. The purpose of the program is to encourage the public to report hate crimes. As part of this initiative, the CCHR is partnering with eight community-based organizations across the city serving diverse populations, who will serve as safe sites where the public can go to receive support and assistance in reporting hate crimes to the police.

The CCHR remains committed to reducing discrimination and hate in Chicago, to be a beacon of light, and make equity a guiding principle in our planning for 2024 and beyond. Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully,

Nancy Andrade  
Chair and Commissioner