

ANNUAL REPORT

2021 FISCAL YEAR

JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021



RHODE ISLAND COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

180 WESTMINSTER STREET, THIRD FLOOR
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903-1918

PHONE: 401-222-2661

FAX: 401-222-2616

VOICE RELAY: 7-1-1

WWW.RICHR.RI.GOV



“The practice or policy of discrimination against individuals ... is a matter of state concern. Such discrimination foments domestic strife and unrest, threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of the state, and undermines the foundations of a free democratic state. The denial of equal employment opportunities because of such discrimination and the consequent failure to utilize the productive capacities of individuals to their fullest extent deprive large segments of the population of the state of earnings necessary to maintain decent standards of living, necessitates their resort to public relief, and intensifies group conflicts, thereby resulting in grave injury to the public safety, health, and welfare.

It is hereby declared to be the public policy of this state to foster the employment of all individuals in this state in accordance with their fullest capacities ... and to safeguard their right to obtain and hold employment without such discrimination.

The right of all individuals in this state to equal employment opportunities ... is hereby recognized as, and declared to be a civil right.”

– From R.I. Public Laws 1949, Ch. 2181, by which the Commission for Human Rights was created and empowered

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COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF MEMBERS

COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson: John B. Susa, Ph.D.
Angelyne E. Cooper, Esq.
Cynthia M. Hiatt, Esq.
Rochelle Bates Lee
Marcus P. Mitchell
Tolulope Kevin Olasanoye, Esq.
Iraida Diaz Williams

STAFF

Executive Director: Michael D. Évora, Esq.

Staff Attorney: Kate C. Brody, Esq.

Staff Attorney: John C. Bogue, Jr., Esq.

HUD Project Director: Angie V. Lovegrove

EEOC Project Director: Marlene Colón Toribio

Sr. Compliance Officer: Tina M. Christy

Sr. Compliance Officer: Allison G. Coté

Sr. Compliance Officer: Jason Flanders

Sr. Compliance Officer: Carluis Mercedes

Investigator: Adriana Vargas

Investigator: Yvonne S. Yu

Chief Clerk: Betsy A. Ross

Administrative Aide: Zaida Rivera

Administrative Aide: Lynn Soccio

FY 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

INTAKE

The Commission took in **233 charges of discrimination**, representing a 19.7% decrease from FY 2020. Of the new charges, 72.1% were in the area of employment, 22.7% in housing and 3.9% in public accommodations. Charges of disability discrimination in delivery of services (unrelated to employment, housing or public accommodations) accounted for 1.3% of intake.

Claims of disability discrimination predominated, with 48% of cases taken in (112 cases), containing an allegation of disability discrimination. **Retaliation-based claims** followed in number, with 33.5% of cases (78 cases), containing an allegation of retaliation for protected activity such as having opposed unlawful practices. **Sex-based claims** (including pregnancy and sexual harassment claims) and **race-based claims** followed at 26.2% (61 cases) and 24% (56 cases), respectively. An allegation of **age-based** discrimination was raised in 21.9% (51 cases) of total cases.

INVESTIGATIONS/DISPOSITIONS

- **Probable Cause** was found in approximately 9.3% of total cases processed, representing a decrease from FY 2020 (12.6%);
- **No Probable Cause** was found in approximately 37.3% of total cases processed, representing an increase from FY 2020 (28.7%); a substantial number of these cases resulted from a complainant's failure to pursue their charge;
- Approximately 18.3% of cases taken in **settled prior to a determination of Probable Cause or No Probable Cause**, representing a decrease from FY 2020 (22.9%).

DECREASED CASE PROCESSING TIME

The Commission has realized a steady and significant decrease in the time taken to process cases. While the average age of a case at closure in FY 2003 was over three years, the average age of cases closed in FY 2021 was 398 days.

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

NOTE: the vast majority of hearings scheduled for the fiscal year were postponed due to constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission issued the following Decision and Order during the fiscal year:

- The Commission found that respondent company violated the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities Act by denying complainant his requested reasonable accommodation of an interpreter which would have allowed complainant to receive the services of Respondent. The complainant, who is an individual with a hearing impairment, sought to attend a workshop given by respondent and asked that respondent provide him an ASL interpreter and a notetaker to enable him to fully and equally receive the services of respondent at the workshop. The Commission, finding that respondent refused these requests, ordered respondent to pay complainant compensatory damages, to cease and desist its unlawful practices, to train its staff on the requirements of antidiscrimination laws, and to include a notice on all of its public communications that explained that it would provide services to lead to effective communications for qualified persons with disabilities.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Commission presented testimony supporting bills seeking to expand protections in the laws it enforces, as well as bills related to issues such as equal pay, voter access, police officer training, "payday lender" repeal and expungement of criminal records.

OUTREACH

Commission staff members conducted **59 outreach/education activities** in the community, reaching **over 1,400 employers, housing providers and individuals** and educating them about their rights and responsibilities pursuant to state and federal antidiscrimination laws. Activities included in-person and virtual sessions as well as the placement of fair housing advertisements in news publications throughout the state.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (Commission) was created by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1949 and is one of the oldest state anti-discrimination agencies in the country. In establishing the Commission, the General Assembly declared that “[t]he practice or policy of discrimination against individuals ... is a matter of state concern” and observed that “... discrimination foments domestic strife and unrest, threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of the state, and undermines the foundations of a free democratic state”. R.I.G.L. § 28-5-2. Through impartial investigation, formal and informal resolution efforts, predetermination conferences and administrative hearings, the Commission seeks to ensure due process for both complainants (charging parties) and respondents (those against whom charges are filed), to provide redress for victims of discrimination and to properly dismiss cases in those instances in which charges of discrimination lack evidentiary support.

The Commission enforces Rhode Island anti-discrimination laws in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and delivery of services. The employment and public accommodations statutes prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex, disability, ancestral origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and age. The housing statute, in addition to prohibiting discrimination on these bases, also prohibits discrimination based on marital status, familial status, status as a victim of domestic abuse, housing status, military status and association

with members of a protected class. The credit statute, in addition to prohibiting discrimination on the bases covered by the employment law, also prohibits discrimination based on marital status, familial status and military status. Discrimination in the delivery of services on the basis of disability is prohibited. All of the laws enforced by the Commission also prohibit retaliation against an individual for protected activity such as having opposed unlawful practices.

The Commission’s major program activities include intake, investigation, conciliation, administrative hearings, enforcement, outreach and education.

The Commission was created and empowered by Title 28, Chapter 5 of the General Laws of Rhode Island (the Fair Employment Practices Act) and has statutory responsibility to enforce the following laws:

- **Fair Employment Practices Act**
(R.I.G.L. § 28-5-1, *et seq.*)
- **Fair Housing Practices Act**
(R.I.G.L. § 34-37-1, *et seq.*)
- **Hotels and Public Places Act**
(R.I.G.L. § 11-24-1, *et seq.*)
- **Prevention and Suppression of Contagious Diseases — HIV/AIDS Act**
(R.I.G.L. §§ 23-6.3-11 and 23-6.3-12)
- **Civil Rights of People with Disabilities Act**
(R.I.G.L. § 42-87-1, *et seq.*)
- **Equal Rights of Blind and Deaf Persons to Public Facilities Act**
(R.I.G.L. § 40-9.1-1, *et seq.*)

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Commission is overseen by seven Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Commissioners are not compensated for the services they render to the agency.

In addition to enforcing state laws, the Commission has contractual agreements with the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** and the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** to assist in the enforcement of the following federal laws: **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**; the **Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967**; the **Americans with Disabilities Act**; and **Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968**.

COMMISSION WORKFORCE PROFILE

	Number of Employees	Percent of Total
Total Staff	14	100%
Women	10	71.4%
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	8	57.1%

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMITMENT

The Commission's commitment to equal opportunity remains constant. In addition to promoting its internal affirmative action plan, the Commission routinely engages in endeavors geared to enrich and diversify the Rhode Island community. Staff members are available to participate in seminars and conferences that address equal opportunity as it relates to the Commission's work.

PROTECTED CATEGORIES UNDER STATE AND FEDERAL LAW

	EMPLOYMENT		HOUSING		PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS	CREDIT
	State	Federal	State	Federal	State	State
Race	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Color	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ancestral Origin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex ^[1]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Disability ^[2]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age ^[3]	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Sexual Orientation ^[4]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender Identity or Expression ^[5]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Familial Status			✓	✓		✓
Marital Status			✓	*		✓
Status as a Victim of Domestic Abuse			✓	*		
Housing Status ^[6]			✓			
Conviction Status ^[7] (“Ban the Box”)	✓					
Military Status ^[8]			✓			✓
Retaliation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
* Federal law prohibits discrimination on this basis in certain instances.						

1 Includes sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status.

2 Includes physical and mental disabilities.

3 Protects individuals 40+ years of age in Employment; protects individuals 18+ years of age in Housing, Public Accommodations and Credit.

4 Protects individuals who are heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.

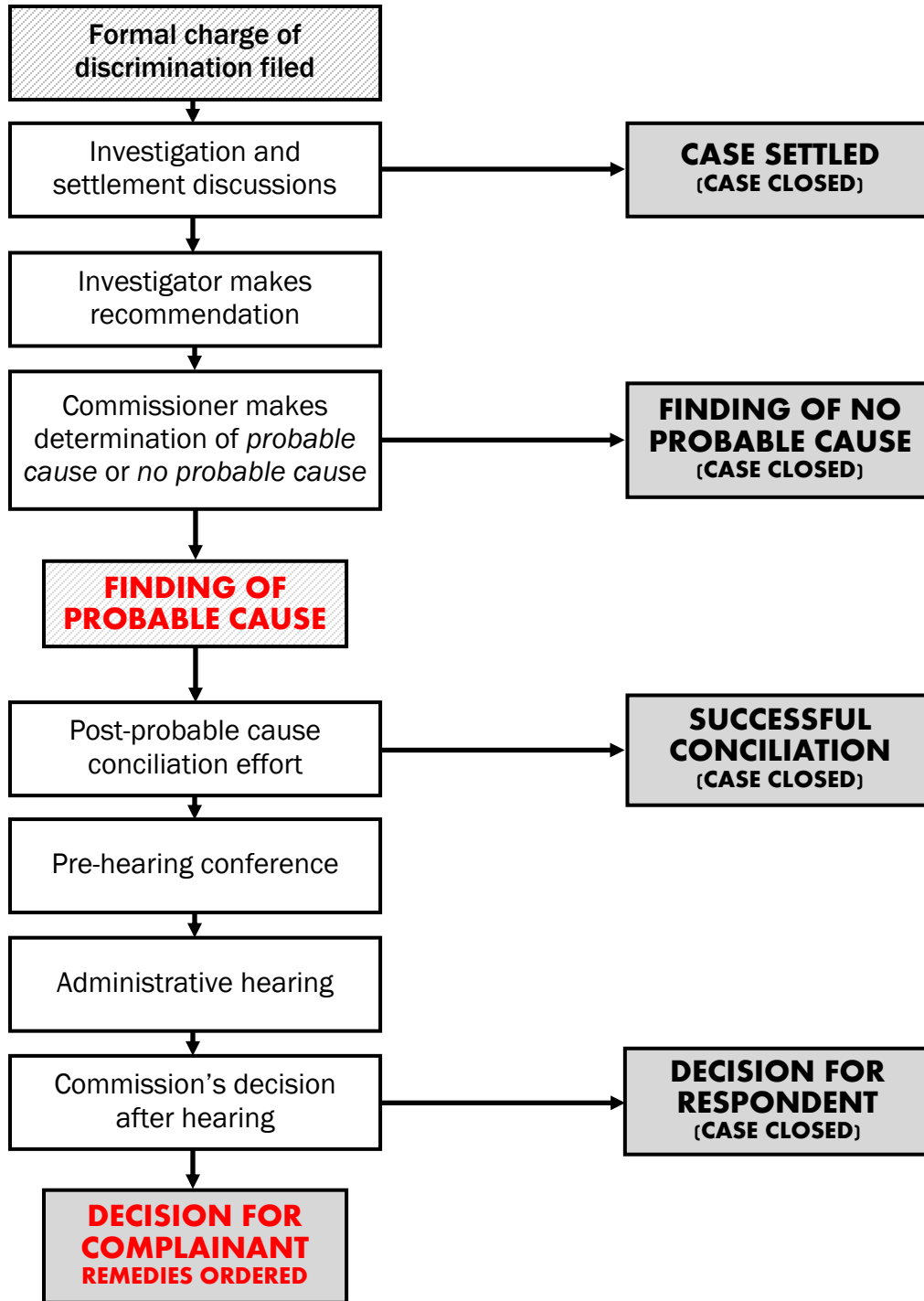
5 Includes an individual’s actual or perceived gender, as well as an individual’s gender identity, gender-related self-image, gender-related appearance, or gender-related expression, whether or not that gender identity, gender-related self-image, appearance or expression is different from that traditionally associated with that individual’s sex at birth.

6 “Housing Status” means the status of having or not having a fixed or regular residence, including the status of living on the streets or in a homeless shelter or similar temporary residence.

7 Prohibits employers from inquiring before a first interview, either via an employment application or otherwise, whether an applicant has been convicted of a crime. Certain exceptions apply.

8 “Military Status” means status as a service member in the Armed Forces, or status as a veteran with an honorable discharge or an honorable or general administrative discharge.

CHARGE PROCESS SUMMARY



NOTE: Rhode Island law expressly provides that, under certain circumstances, complainants and/or respondents may elect to terminate proceedings before the Commission and have the case heard in Superior Court.

FEDERAL AGREEMENTS

U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

The Commission has been certified by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as a Fair Employment Practices Agency since 1968. As such, the Commission is authorized to process charges of employment discrimination which fall under federal as well as state jurisdiction (co-filed). Each year, the Commission enters into a work-sharing agreement with EEOC under which the Commission is expected to investigate a predetermined number of cases. EEOC reimburses the Commission at a fixed rate for each case closed in compliance with EEOC guidelines.

This year, the Commission exceeded its revised contractual obligation of 140 cases by closing 143 co-filed cases.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Commission has been certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a “substantially equivalent” agency pursuant to the federal Fair Housing Act. The Commission enters into an annual contract with HUD for fixed-rate reimbursement for the processing of housing cases filed under both state and federal law.

This year, the Commission took in 53 charges of alleged housing discrimination, 51 of which were co-filed with HUD, and processed 52 charges, 49 of which were co-filed with HUD.

FEDERAL FUNDING FY 2021*

EEOC	Case Processing	\$112,000
	Training/Transportation	\$0
	FEPA Engagement Funds	\$1,000
	TOTAL:	\$113,000
HUD	Case Processing	\$126,400
	Administrative Costs	\$36,273
	Post-Cause Supplement	\$16,000
	Training/Transportation	\$17,600
	TOTAL:	\$196,273
TOTAL (ALL FEDERAL FUNDS):		\$309,273

* EEOC’s contract year was October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. HUD’s contract year was July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

INTAKE

Inquiries are received and evaluated. If jurisdictional requirements are met, a formal charge of discrimination is filed and forwarded to the respondent.

The intake process usually begins with a telephone call or visit to the Commission, or to the agency website. Each year the agency receives thousands of inquiries from individuals requesting information or wanting to pursue a charge of discrimination. The majority of these inquiries do not come within the jurisdiction of the Commission and these are referred to other agencies or organizations. In those cases in which the inquiry presents a claim within the Commission’s jurisdiction, an intake officer assists the individual in filing a formal charge of discrimination.

CASES TAKEN IN

The Commission took in a total of **233 cases** in the fiscal year, representing a 24.5 percent decrease from FY 2020 (290).

- **Disability claims predominated**, with a total of 112 new cases (48% of total cases) containing an allegation of disability discrimination.
- **Retaliation-based claims** followed, with 78 cases (33.5% of total cases) containing an allegation of retaliation for having engaged in protected activity.
- **Sex-based claims** (including pregnancy and sexual harassment claims) were made in 61 cases (26.2% of total cases). Of these, an allegation of **sexual harassment** was made in 15 cases (6.4% of total cases).
- **Race-based claims** were raised in 56 cases (24% of total cases).
- **Age-based claims** were raised in 51 cases (21.9% of total cases).

FY 2021 INTAKE BY AREA

	Number of Cases	Percent of Total
Employment	168	72.1%
Housing	53	22.7%
Public Accommodations	9	3.9%
Delivery of Services*	3	1.3%
Credit	0	0%
TOTALS:	233	100

* Figures reflect charges of disability discrimination in delivery of services (unrelated to employment, housing, public accommodations or credit).

INTAKE

FY 2021 INTAKE BY BASIS AND AREA ^[1]

	Employ.	Housing	Public Accom.	Indiv. With Disability ^[2]	Credit	TOTALS:
Age	47	2	2	N/A	0	51
Ancestral Origin	18	1	1	N/A	0	20
Color	31	10	4	N/A	0	45
Disability	74	30	5	3	0	112
Familial Status	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	0	1
Gender Identity or Expression	0	0	0	N/A	0	0
Housing Status	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Marital Status	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	0	1
Military Status	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0	0
Race	39	13	4	N/A	0	56
Religion	3	1	1	N/A	0	5
Retaliation	65	9	2	2	0	78
Sex ^[3]	53	8	0	N/A	0	61
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	15	0	0	N/A	0	15
Sexual Orientation	9	0	0	N/A	0	9
Status as Victim of Domestic Abuse	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Unlawful Questioning	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0

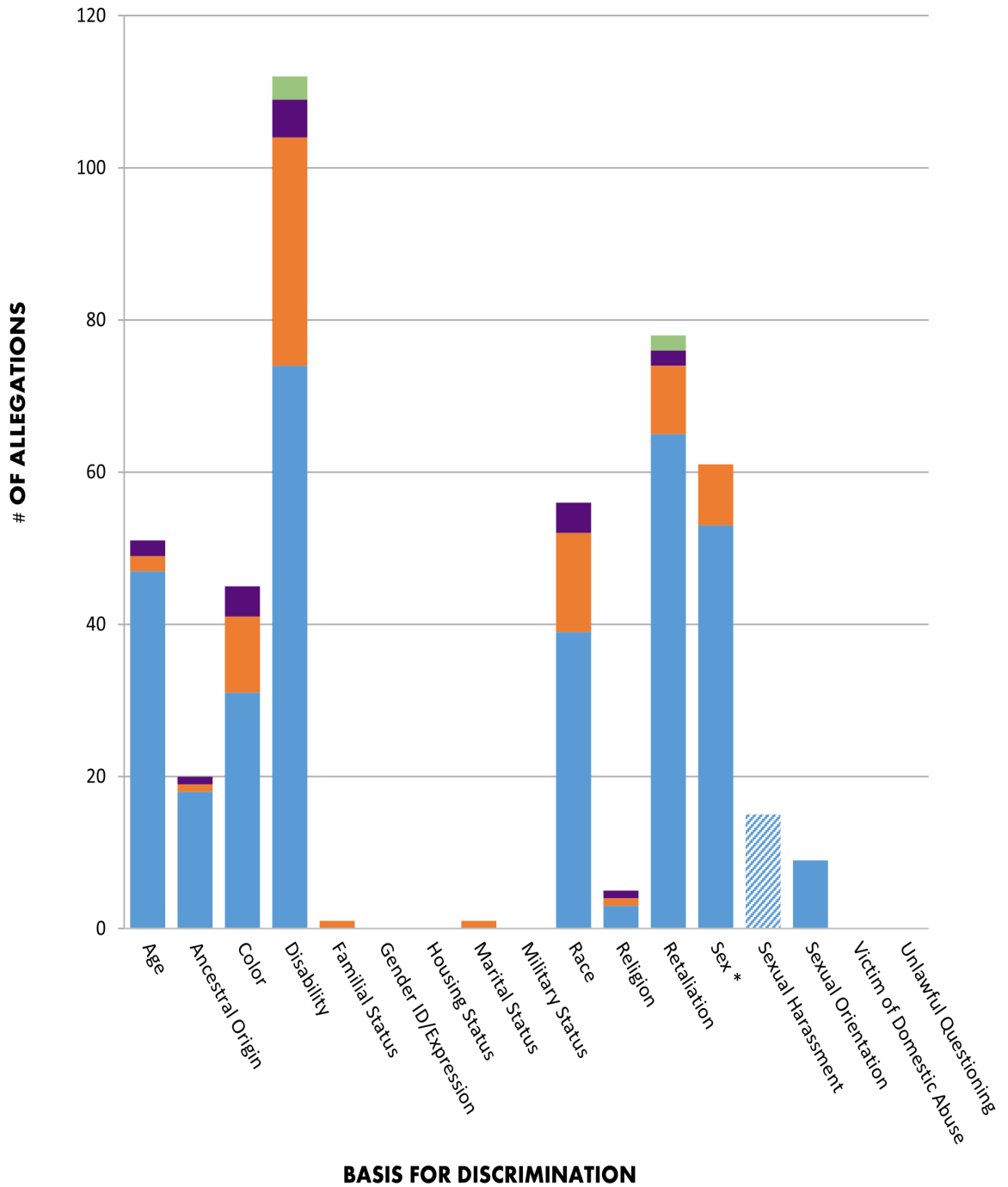
[1] Figures reflect the fact that most charges filed allege more than one basis of discrimination. Example: if a given charge alleged discrimination on the bases of age, race and color, it is reflected in the figures for all three categories.

[2] Figures reflect charges of disability discrimination in delivery of services (unrelated to employment, housing, public accommodations or credit).

[3] Includes allegations of pregnancy discrimination and sexual harassment.

INTAKE

FY 2021 INTAKE BY BASIS



* Includes allegations of pregnancy and sexual harassment.

INVESTIGATIONS/DISPOSITIONS

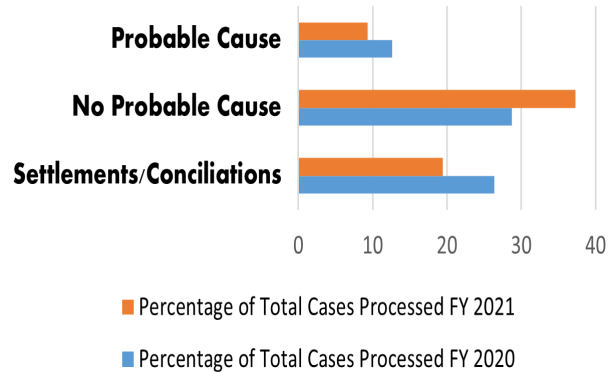
Upon assignment, an investigator conducts an impartial investigation of the allegations and, after analyzing all ele-

After the intake phase is completed and a formal charge of discrimination is filed, each case is assigned to an investigator. The average time from the filing of a charge to assignment to an investigator was six weeks or less. Most of the Commission's personnel resources are devoted to the investigation process. **Approximately 19.4% of case closures in FY 2021 resulted from settlements or conciliations**, representing a decrease from FY 2020 (26.4%).

For those cases which do not settle, investigators use a variety of techniques to investigate the case. Often the investigators hold Predetermination Conferences where both complainants and respondents can present evidence to support or refute the allegations. The conferences are held before a Preliminary Investigating Commissioner. A case may involve the collection and analysis of comparative, statistical and/or direct evidence. Investigators may need to travel on-site to collect information and testimony pertinent to the charge. Not all investigations are alike. The individual characteristics of each case will influence an investigator's approach. In furtherance of the investigative process, the Commission issued multiple subpoenas in the fiscal year to compel the production of documents and witness testimony.

In FY 2021, a determination of Probable Cause was rendered in approximately 9.3% of total processed cases, reflecting a decrease from FY 2020 (12.6%). While the percentage of Probable Cause cases may seem low, it should be noted that many potential Probable Cause cases settle prior to a formal determina-

**CASE DISPOSITIONS
FY 2021 vs. FY 2020**



tion as to Cause and some cases in which the complainant requests a right to sue may be Probable Cause cases. **During the fiscal year, the Commission settled 51 cases (18.3% of total cases processed) prior to a determination as to whether Probable Cause existed.**

A No Probable Cause determination was rendered in approximately 37.3% of total processed cases, reflecting an increase from FY 2020 (28.7%). A significant number of these No Cause findings resulted from a complainant's failure to pursue their charge by failing to respond to requests for information.

For the twenty-third consecutive year, the Commission processed more cases than it took in (279 vs. 233), resulting in a continued decrease in the number of cases carried forward to the next fiscal year. "Processed" cases include cases in which a determination of Probable Cause is rendered. Although such cases are not yet closed, they are included in the list of case dispositions to provide an accurate view of the Commission's work.

INVESTIGATIONS/DISPOSITIONS

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Administrative Closures	Includes cases closed for failure to locate a complainant, complainant's failure to cooperate, no jurisdiction, charges withdrawn without benefits, receiverships, and bankruptcies.
Conciliation	Case settled after a finding of probable cause.
Decision and Order	Commission makes a finding after a hearing before the agency. If the decision is for the complainant, remedies are ordered. If it is for the respondent, the case is dismissed.
Negotiated Settlement	Case formally settled prior to a finding of Probable Cause or No Probable Cause.
No Probable Cause	Insufficient evidence exists to support the probability that the complainant was a victim of discrimination.
Probable Cause	Sufficient evidence exists to support the probability that the complainant was a victim of discrimination.
Right to Sue	Complainant is issued a Notice enabling her/him to take the case to court, and the Commission closes the case internally.
Withdrawal with Settlement	Complainant withdraws the case upon receiving a settlement from the respondent.

CASE DISPOSITIONS FY 2021

TYPE OF DISPOSITION	# OF CASES
Probable Cause	26
No Probable Cause	104
Conciliation*	3
Negotiated Settlement	7
Withdrawal with Settlement	44
Right to Sue	85
Decision and Order	1
Administrative Closure	9
TOTAL:	279

* Includes conciliation of cases in which probable cause was found in a prior fiscal year.

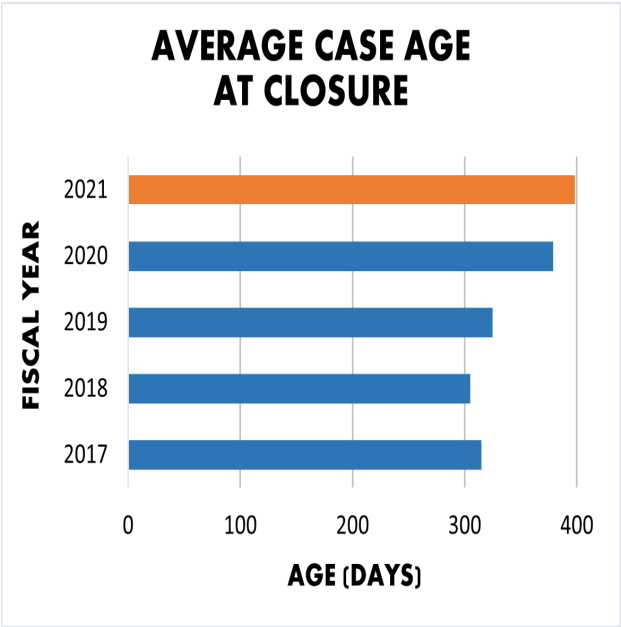
STATUS OF FY 2021 PROBABLE CAUSE CASES

Probable Cause Rulings (includes mixed rulings)	26
Respondent's Election to Superior Court for Trial	15
Complainant's Election	3
Joint Election	3
Conciliation	0
Open as of 6/30/21 [pending right to sue, administrative hearing, conciliation or other action]	5

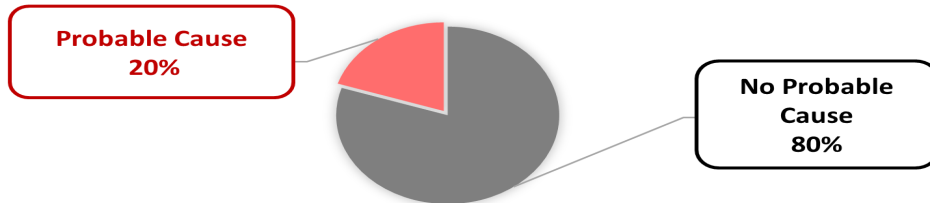
CASELOAD STATISTICS

CASE PROCESSING TIME

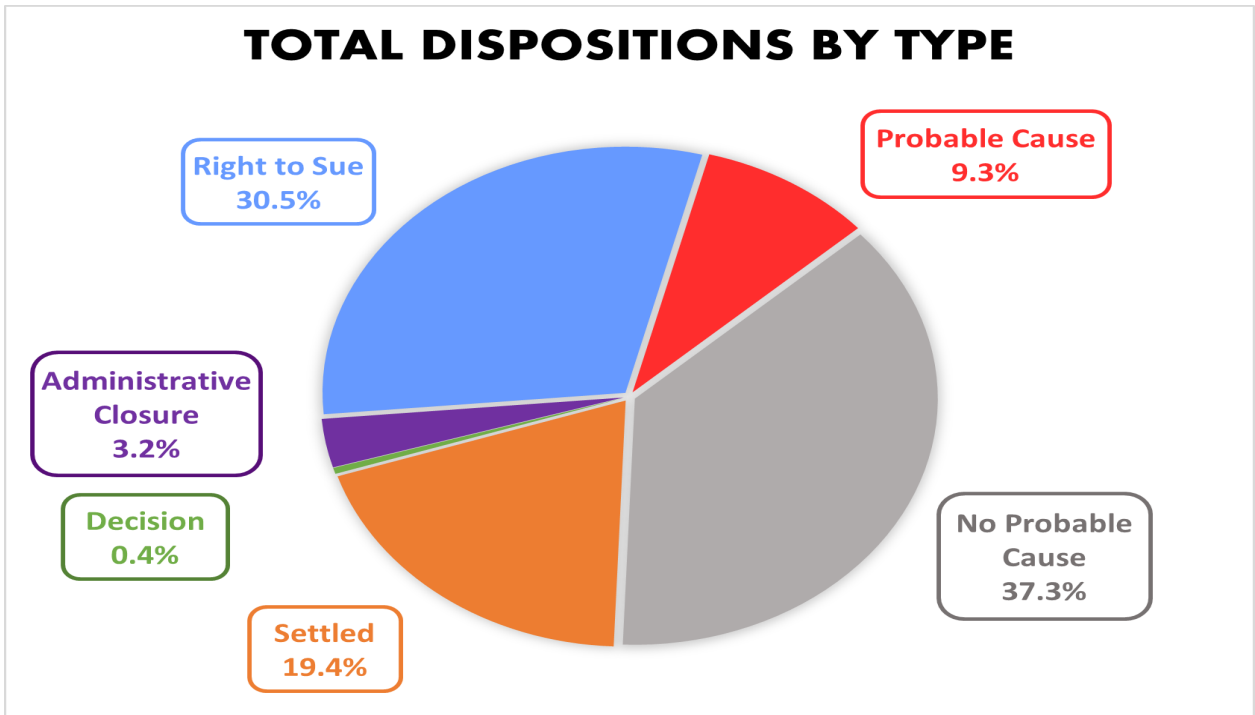
In recent years, the Commission has labored to ensure more expeditious processing of cases. The “hands on” approach in caseload management taken by Director Évora, concerted staff efforts and the use of the Commission’s subpoena power to expedite stalled investigations are among the tools used to achieve success in this area. The average age of cases closed in FY 2003 exceeded three years. By FY 2006, that time had been decreased to 423 days. For FY 2021, the average age of a case at closure was 398 days.



INVESTIGATIVE RULINGS 2021



TOTAL DISPOSITIONS BY TYPE



ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

After a Probable Cause ruling, a Commissioner may conduct an administrative hearing during which sworn testimony is taken before a stenographer. A Decision and Order is rendered thereafter.

The administrative hearing process begins after the Preliminary Investigating Commissioner finds probable cause and the parties are unable to conciliate. (The parties have the statutory right, after a finding of probable cause, to elect to have the matter heard and decided in the Superior Court; in cases in which no such election is made, the agency's administrative hearing process commences.) One Commissioner conducts the hearing with the assistance of a Staff Attorney. At the hearing, which is less formal than a court trial, witnesses present sworn testimony and relevant exhibits are accepted. A stenographer makes a record of the entire proceeding. After the parties present all their evidence, three Commissioners decide the case and issue a Decision and Order.

A typical hearing lasts from one to three days. For all parties involved, including the Commission, the administrative hearing can be a costly and time-consuming activity. Despite receiving no reimbursement for services rendered, Commissioners routinely hold hearings.

In FY 2021, the Commission issued the following Decision and Order:

NOTE: the vast majority of hearings scheduled for the fiscal year were postponed due to constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joseph S. Cardillo v. FBA Distributors, LLC Joseph S. Cardillo v. FBA Distributors, LLC (December 22, 2020)

Complainant alleged that Respondent denied him the services of a public accommodation and denied him a reasonable accommodation, violations of the Hotels and Public Places Act ("public accommodations law") and the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities Act ("CRPDA"). Respondent did not appear at the hearing. Complainant, who is an individual with a hearing impairment, sought to attend a workshop given by Respondent and asked that Respondent provide him an ASL interpreter and a notetaker to enable him to fully and equally receive the services of Respondent at the workshop. The Commission found that Respondent refused these requests and asked Complainant to bring a friend who knows how to communicate/interpret via ASL. Complainant contacted the Rhode Island Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RICDHH) and asked them to contact Respondent. RICDHH contacted Respondent to explain the requirement that Respondent provide a qualified interpreter for Complainant. Complainant traveled to the workshop and found that no ASL interpreter had been scheduled. Complainant could

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

not understand what people were saying at the workshop. The Commission dismissed the allegations under the public accommodations law, finding that Respondent did not bar complainant from its seminars and that the public accommodations act, unlike the CRPDA, does not require that a covered entity provide a reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities. However, the Commission found that Respondent violated the CRPDA by denying Complainant his requested reasonable accommodation of an interpreter which would have allowed Complainant to receive the services of Respondent. The Commission ordered Respondent to pay Complainant \$5,065 plus 12% interest in compensatory damages, to cease and desist its unlawful practices, to train its staff on the requirements of antidiscrimination laws, and to include a notice on all of its public communications that explained that it would provide services to lead to effective communications for qualified persons with disabilities.

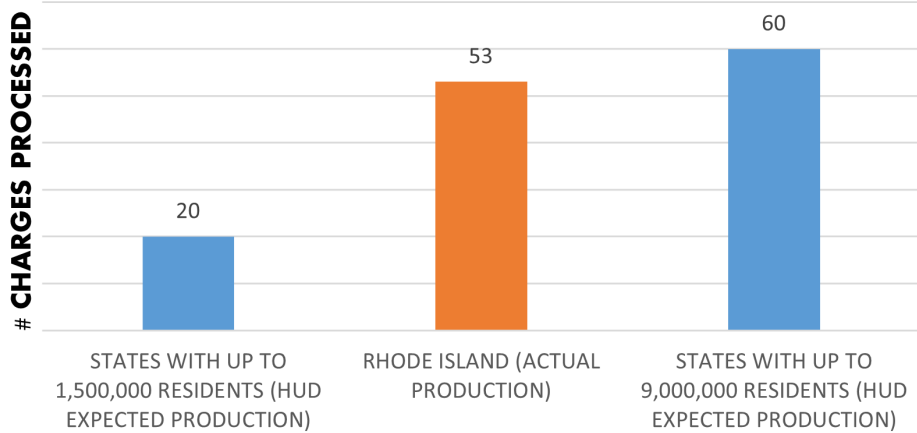
FAIR HOUSING OVERVIEW

HOUSING CASELOAD

Under guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a state having a population of up to 1,500,000 residents should, on average, receive and process up to 20 fair housing charges per year. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Rhode Island in 2019 at 1,059,361 residents. **The Commission received 53 charges and processed 52 charges in FY 2021, which more closely approximates HUD’s estimated average workload of a state having a population of 900,000 residents.**

INTAKE AND DISPOSITIONS FIVE-YEAR VIEW		
FY	INTAKE	PROCESSED
2021	53	52
2020	65	82
2019	74	66
2018	52	71
2017	81	72

COMMISSION ACTUAL PRODUCTION COMPARED TO HUD EXPECTED WORKLOAD



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Commission annually reviews all bills before the General Assembly and identifies and monitors those which either affect the agency directly or have an impact in the area of civil rights.

During the 2021 legislative session, Commission staff members presented oral and/or written testimony on numerous bills.

Among the bills which the Commission **supported** were bills seeking to:

- amend the state Fair Housing Practices Act (FHPA) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of “lawful source of income” **(PASSED; NOW LAW)**
- remove an exemption from the FHPA which allows property owners who reside in owner-occupied dwellings of three units or less to discriminate against housing seekers on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression by refusing to rent to them. **(PASSED; NOW LAW)**
- require all applicants for a real estate broker’s or salesperson’s license to submit to and pass a written examination to include the topic of fair housing, requiring proof of “reasonable familiarity with and knowledge of duties and responsibilities established by [the FHPA]”. **(PASSED; NOW LAW)**
- amend the state Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA) to prohibit agreements requiring that alleged civil rights violations remain confidential and to prohibit non-disparagement agreements concerning alleged civil rights violations
- amend the state FEPA to clarify that its provisions on individual liability include individual respondent employees
- prohibit landlords from inquiring about the immigration or citizenship status of a tenant or prospective tenant of residential rental property
- expand the equal pay provisions under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor and Training
- repeal the state’s voter ID law and create a process for in-person early voting
- prohibit discrimination against a potential organ transplant recipient based solely on their physical or mental disability
- amend the FEPA to define “Race” as including traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles such as braids, locks and twists
- amend various state laws to provide greater opportunities for expungement of criminal records
- prohibit the state from denying a license, permit, certificate or registration to practice a profession because of a criminal conviction (with certain exceptions)
- amend the FEPA to include volunteers and unpaid interns as “employees”
- amend the Hate Crimes Sentencing Act to add gender identify or expression to protected groups thereunder.
- require police commission on standards to publish training standards for police officers in handling incidents involving persons with cognitive, developmental or communication-related disabilities
- repeal “payday lender” provisions in state law
- broaden antidiscrimination protections for medical marijuana users

OUTREACH

Upon request, the Commission provides free outreach training to the public. In FY21 the Commission's efforts reached over 1,400 employers, housing providers and individuals, educating them about their rights and responsibilities under state and federal law.

DATE	TOPIC	LOCATION/ GROUP
7/6/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Westerly Sun
7/7/20	General Overview/LGBTQ issues	RI LGBTQ Public Policy Roundtable, Zoom meeting
7/7/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in The Reminder
7/8/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Bargain Buyer
7/8/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Valley Breeze, No. Prov.
7/8/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Valley Breeze, Pawt.
7/8/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Barrington Times
7/8/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Sakonnet Times
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Warren Times Gazette
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Warwick Beacon
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Cranston Herald
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Johnston Sunrise
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Valley Breeze, Cumb./ Lincoln
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Valley Breeze, No. Smithfield/ Woonsocket
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Valley Breeze & Observer
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Bristol Phoenix
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Portsmouth Times
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Sakonnet Times
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Westport Shorelines
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in East Prov. Post

OUTREACH

7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in The Independent
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Newport This Week
7/9/20	Fair Housing – COVID-19 -related discrimination	Ad in Jamestown Press
8/13/20	Fair Housing/Disability Discrimination	Virtual, Family Service of RI
8/13/20	General Overview; Employment Discrimination	Virtual, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI
8/27/20	General Overview; Trans & Queer Rights	Virtual, “Know Your Rights” session sponsored by Thundermist
9/2/20	Fair Housing	Virtual, RI Minority Elder Task Force
9/18/20	Fair Housing	Steven Winter Associates, Inc.
9/22/20	General Overview	Virtual, East Providence Affirmative Action Committee
10/15/20	General Overview and Sexual Harassment <i>TWO SESSIONS</i>	Sockanossett Crossroads, Cranston
10/16/20	General Overview and Sexual Harassment <i>TWO SESSIONS</i>	Sockanossett Crossroads, Cranston
10/19/20	General Overview and Sexual Harassment <i>TWO SESSIONS</i>	Sockanossett Crossroads, Cranston
10/20/20	General Overview and Sexual Harassment <i>TWO SESSIONS</i>	Sockanossett Crossroads, Cranston
10/23/20	General Overview/ Employment Discrimination	Virtual, YearUp
11/17/20	General	Virtual Coffee Hour of RI Coalition for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing
11/18/20	Fair Housing	Virtual, co-hosted by Greater Providence Board of Realtors and Northern RI Board of Realtors
1/6/21	General Overview/LGBTQ issues	Virtual, RI LGBTQ Public Policy Roundtable
2/17/21	Fair Housing	RI Minority Elder Task Force
2/19/21	General/Source of Income Housing Legislation	Virtual, RI LGBTQ Public Policy Roundtable
2/22/21	Fair Housing/Source of Income Protection	Virtual, Consortium in support of source of income protection

OUTREACH

2/24/21	Fair Housing/Disability Issues	Virtual, PLAN RI Housing Alternatives
3/10/21	General Overview/LGBTQ issues	Virtual, RI LGBTQ Public Policy Roundtable
3/11/21	General Overview & Sexual Harassment	RI House of Representatives (in-person and remote participants)
4/7/21	Fair Housing	Virtual, D&D Realty
4/12/21	General Overview	Virtual, East Providence Affirmative Action Committee meeting
4/13/21	General Overview	Virtual, Providence Human Relations Commission Policy Committee
4/15/21	General Overview	Fair Housing & Civil Rights Virtual Conference (Springfield):
4/23/21	General Overview/ Employment Discrimination	Virtual webinar, YearUp
4/27/21	Fair Housing (Staff Member Interview)	Virtual (posted on YouTube) interview with Housing Network RI
4/28/21	Fair Housing	RI Minority Elder Task Force (virtual)
4/29/21	Fair Housing – addition of “source of income” protection to fair housing law	Facebook Live
5/6/21	Fair Housing – Panel on new Source of Income housing protection	Virtual webinar – sponsored by RI Assoc. of Realtors
6/9/21	Enforcing Fair Housing Laws in RI	Facebook Live event with SouthCoast Fair Housing
6/15/21	Fair Housing	Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Newport
6/17/21	General Overview	Alfred Lima Elementary School, Career Day for 2 nd Graders

INTERNS

Each year, high school, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as recent graduates, receive first-hand experience in the Commission's primary functions through the agency's intern program.

Interns assist in investigations, conduct legal research, perform clerical duties and work independently through a structured program. For their work, interns may earn college/graduate school credits, stipends through work-study grants, and/or receive compensation from the state Government Internship Program.

FALL 2020

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
SUSPENDED
DUE TO
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

SUMMER 2021

Dreydan Cianci	University of Rhode Island
Kiron Ireland	Roger Williams Univ. School of Law
Dalton Maldonado	Roger Williams Univ. School of Law
Olesya Tamburro	College of the Holy Cross

SPRING 2021

Alicia Mies	Brown University
Katie Norman	University of Rhode Island

RECOGNITIONS

The Commission recognizes the following Commissioners and staff members.



Betsy A. Ross Retires

Betsy was first employed at the Commission through the CETA program in June 1978 as a Clerk Typist. The CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) Program was part of the State's now defunct Department of Economic Development/Job Development and Training Division. Betsy had graduated from Central High School and had completed coursework in Business Marketing and Advertising at the University of Rhode Island. Her prior employment experience included serving as a Bookkeeper for a local school lunch program and a Real Estate Processor for a local bank.

Betsy was formally hired at the Commission as a state employee in March 1979 as a Clerk Typist. She was promoted to Sr. Clerk Typist in July 1980, having demonstrated "a willingness to accept additional duties and the ability to quickly learn new skills" according to a position Evaluation Form.

Betsy became the Commission's Chief Clerk under the Three-Day Rule in December 1990 and was formally hired into that position in April 1991.

As Chief Clerk, Betsy faithfully and professionally executed her duties, including overseeing the agency's clerical staff and handling all personnel and payroll matters. Her loyalty and commitment to the agency ran so deep that

she scheduled her vacations around her ability to prepare and submit the Commission's biweekly payroll. As the agency's Affirmative Action Officer, she participated on dozens of selection committees to help ensure that the most qualified and promising applicants were hired to further the agency's mission. Betsy retired in May 2021, having served the State of Rhode Island for 43 years.



Angie V. Lovgrove Retires

Angie first began her journey with the Commission in June of 1992, when she was hired as a temp to conduct investigative work and fill an urgent bilingual need after the Commission's only bilingual (Spanish) investigative staff member left the agency. She was formally hired as a state employee at the Commission in November 1992 as an Investigator. Angie had graduated from Mt. Pleasant High School and had completed coursework in Political Science and English at Rhode Island College. Prior to starting at the Commission, she had worked as an Industrial Supervisor and Office Division Representative for ManPower Temporary Services.

Angie was promoted to Sr. Compliance Officer in January 1995 and to HUD Project Director in July of 1998.

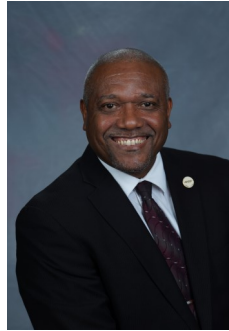
RECOGNITIONS

As HUD Project Director, Angie passionately and diligently oversaw the agency's fair housing unit and served as the agency's liaison to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She conducted comprehensive investigations, successfully mediated hundreds of cases and engaged in innumerable trainings and outreaches across Rhode Island to educate the members of the public on their rights and responsibilities under state and federal fair housing laws. victims of housing discrimination.”

As a testament to her ability to multi-task and to achieve success in multiple areas simultaneously, while working full time at the Commission, Angie earned her Bachelor's in Sociology from the University of Rhode Island in 2008 and completed coursework at the Roger Williams University School of Law in 2013 and 2014. She also is a 2000 graduate of Leadership Rhode Island.

Among the many organizations with which Angie became affiliated in her ongoing effort to improve the lives of those in her community and state, are: Urban League of RI (serving as Executive Officer and Vice President); Addiction Recovery (Board member); Atre-vete (Dare to Vote); Movimiento Jibaro (Board member and Vice President); East Providence Affirmative Action Coalition (Board member); Rhode Island Minority Elder Task Force (Board member); Cape Verdean Progressive Center (Board member); East Providence Prevention Coalition (Board member).

Angie retired in May 2021, having served the State of Rhode Island for 29 years.



On December 18, 2020, Marcus P. Mitchell was confirmed by the Senate as a new Commissioner for the Commission, filling the vacancy created upon the resignation of Alberto Aponte-Cardona. His educational achievements

include a degree in Biology & Chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania and a Certificate of Paralegal Studies from the Professional Career Development Institute (GA). He also is a certified Emergency Medical Technician.

Commissioner Mitchell came to the Commission with over 20 years' experience in executive level economic development, community development and business solutions. He has served as an Independent Consultant in business development, strategy and executive management for Shere Enterprises (PA). He serves as a Lead Mediator for the Center for Mediation & Collaboration RI, working with both the United States District Court and the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Farm Services Administration. His previous employment includes Founding President of the Providence Community Library, and Executive Director of Play Fair PA, a statewide coalition of Fortune 500 companies in Pennsylvania. Affiliations include: R.I. Commission on Health Advocacy and Equity; Providence Rotary Club, Samaritans of Rhode Island; Urban League of Philadelphia.



Find current updates on work the Commission is doing, information on our public outreach sessions, and timely news postings of discrimination-related current events on our official Facebook page: *the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights*, or our Instagram page: *humanrightsri*. Follow us to stay informed!



For general information on the Commission, as well as access to intake questionnaires, Rules and Regulations, and a Staff Directory, visit our website:

WWW.RICHR.RI.GOV