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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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BUSINESS MEETING

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2024

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The Commission convened via
Video/Teleconference at 10:00 a.m. EST, Rochelle
Garza, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

ROCHELLE GARZA, Chair

GLENN D. MAGPANTAY, Commissioner

STEPHEN GILCHRIST, Commissioner

J. CHRISTIAN ADAMS, Commissioner

GAIL HERIOT, Commissioner

PETER N. KIRSANOW, Commissioner

VICTORIA FRANCES NOURSE, Commissioner

MONDAIRE JONES, Commissioner

MAURO MORALES, Staff Director

DAVID GANZ, General Counsel

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STAFF PRESENT:

DAVID MUSSATT, DIRECTOR, RPCU

TINALOUISE MARTIN, DIRECTOR, OM

CHAIR MICHELLE RYDZ, NORTH DAKOTA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CHAIR STEVEN IRWIN, PENNSYLVANIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

REV. DR. DONNIE ANDERSON, MEMBER, RHODE ISLAND

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMMISSIONER ASSISTANTS PRESENT:

JOHN K. MASHBURN

CARISSA MULDER

THOMAS SIMUEL

IRENA VIDULOVIC

ALEXIS FRAGOSA

NATHALIE DEMIRDJAIN-RIVEST

YVESNER ZAMAR

STEPHANIE WONG

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1 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Heriot?

2 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: I'm here.

3 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Jones?

4 COMMISSIONER JONES: Present.

5 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Kirsanow?

6 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Apologies I was
7 meeting. I'm here.

8 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful. Good morning.
9 Commissioner Magpantay?

10 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Here.

11 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you all. Good
12 morning. Based on that, based on that roll call, we
13 have a quorum of the Commissioners present.

14 Is the Court Reporter present?

15 COURT REPORTER: Yes.

16 CHAIR GARZA: Good morning. Is the
17 Parliamentarian present?

18 MR. GANZ: I am, yes.

19 CHAIR GARZA: Good morning. And, if you
20 wouldn't mind identifying yourself?

21 MR. GANZ: This is David Ganz, General
22 Counsel and Parliamentarian.

23 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful, thank you. And,
24 is the Staff Director present?

25 MR. MORALES: I am present. This is Mauro

1 Morales.

2 B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

3 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful, thank you. Okay.
4 Now, we're going to proceed with today's agenda posted
5 on the Federal Register.

6 Today we're considering the following:
7 first, a presentation by the North Dakota Advisory
8 Committee Chair, Michelle Rydz on civil rights and
9 fair housing.

10 Followed by a presentation by the
11 Pennsylvania Advisory Committee Chair, Steven Irwin on
12 affirmatively furthering fair housing, an analysis of
13 fair housing access and zoning practices.

14 We will then hear from, a presentation by
15 Rhode Island Advisory Committee Member, The Reverend
16 Dr. Donnie Anderson on licensing barriers to
17 employment post-conviction.

18 And then, we're going to conclude with the
19 Staff Director's Report. Are there any motions to
20 amend the current Agenda?

21 Hearing none, we can go ahead and move on
22 to consider the first agenda item in today's meeting
23 As I mentioned, we're going to be hearing from three
24 of our state advisory committees.

25 State advisory committees play a pivotal

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1 role in identifying and addressing civil rights issues
2 at the local and state levels. Their dedication to
3 uncovering inequity and recommending actionable
4 solutions is crucial for promoting justice and
5 equality across the nation.

6 Through their rigorous investigations,
7 public hearings, and comprehensive reports, they
8 ensure that civil rights remain at the forefront of
9 policy discussion. Your work is invaluable.

10 The state advisory committee's work is
11 invaluable. It offers a foundation for meaningful
12 change and safeguarding the rights of all citizens.

13 So, on behalf of the Commission, I want to
14 welcome each of you for being here today and for doing
15 this important work. I know I'm not alone in saying
16 that I look forward to hearing your presentations.

17 And, with that, we will go ahead and begin
18 with our North Dakota Advisory Committee Chair,
19 Michelle Rydz, on the committee's report, civil rights
20 and fair housing in North Dakota.

21 I do want to acknowledge that this report
22 is a crucial step towards dismantling the barriers to
23 fair housing, especially for those post-conviction.
24 And, it addresses a significant gap in our
25 understanding of civil rights within the housing

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sector.

The advisory committee's comprehensive analysis and recommendations aim to tackle systemic issues, ensuring fair housing access for all. And, as this Commission explores broader implications of these findings, we look forward to hearing how we can have a more inclusive and equitable housing for all.

So, thank you, Chair Rydz for joining us.
And, the floor is yours now.

C. BUSINESS MEETING

1. PRESENTATION BY STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CHAIRS ON REPORTS AND RELATED MEMORANDUM:

a. CHAIR MICHELLE RYDZ, NORTH DAKOTA

ADVISORY COMMITTEE, "CIVIL RIGHTS AND
FAIR HOUSING IN NORTH DAKOTA

MS. RYDZ: Hello, can you hear me?

CHAIR GARZA: Yes. We can hear you.

MS. RYDZ: Okay. Hi. So, in July 2020, the North Dakota State Advisory Committee convened a series of public teleconferences to hear testimony about challenges and recommendations regarding access to housing in North Dakota.

In this presentation I'll summarize those key findings that are relevant. And then, I will talk about some of the committee recommendations that we

1 had moving forward.

2 The Fair Housing Act as amended, prohibits
3 housing discrimination on the basis of race, color,
4 religion, national origin, sex, including sexual
5 orientation and gender identity, familial status and
6 disability, and requires multi-family buildings built
7 after 1991 to be accessible.

8 The North Dakota Housing Discrimination
9 Act is substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing
10 Act and adds additional protections with respect to
11 age, marriage, public assistance, and status as a
12 victim of domestic violence.

13 Under the provisions of the North Dakota
14 Century Code, the North Dakota Department of Labor and
15 Human Rights is charged with receiving and
16 investigating complaints of unlawful discrimination.

17 The North Dakota Committee learned that
18 individuals with criminal backgrounds in North Dakota
19 have difficulty securing housing that often results in
20 them obtaining substandard housing or homelessness.

21 Out of a population of 790 thousand people
22 in North Dakota, 213 thousand individuals, or about 28
23 percent of the population has some sort of criminal
24 background. North Dakota's population is 83 percent
25 white, 3 percent black, 5 percent Native American, and

1 4 percent Hispanic.

2 According to the North Dakota Department
3 of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the North Dakota
4 prison population is only 58 percent white, but it's
5 11 percent black, 25 percent Native American, and 6
6 percent Hispanic. This clearly reflects the
7 disproportionate numbers of communities of color that
8 are incarcerated in our state.

9 Many companies, housing providers, and
10 property management companies have blanket policies
11 which require tenant applicants to have no criminal
12 background, including arrest records, thereby severely
13 limiting housing for people with criminal backgrounds.

14 Additionally, North Dakota has a law which
15 allows landlords to charge up to two months' rent as
16 a security deposit if the tenant applicant has been
17 convicted of a felony offense.

18 Because there is a disproportionate number
19 of people of color in North Dakota's prisons and
20 jails, this law may very well have a disparate impact
21 on persons of color. And therefore, be in violation
22 of the Fair Housing Act.

23 Our committee also learned of
24 discrimination based on disability, accounted for the
25 majority of fair housing complaints to high plain --

1 both to High Plains Fair Housing Center, which is the
2 State Fair Housing Organization and to the North
3 Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights, making up
4 around 54 percent of all complaints.

5 A panelist representing High Plains Fair
6 Housing Center said that they conducted a series of
7 fair housing tests to identify barriers to housing for
8 persons with disabilities. The tests consisted of
9 match fair tests.

10 One tester sought an apartment for a
11 family member with a disability and one control tester
12 without a disability. The study found that 23 percent
13 of protected testers experienced steering to less
14 desirable units or buildings with a lower rent, even
15 though the tester provided guidance on what the person
16 with the disability could afford.

17 Findings also show that 68 percent of the
18 protected testers were told that there was no
19 availability in the buildings they inquired about,
20 whereas the match control testers were told that there
21 was availability.

22 Five percent of the protected testers were
23 asked intrusive questions about their disability.
24 When testing for the affirmative right of reasonable
25 accommodation, 40 percent of the testers who inquired

1 about emotional support animals were given overly
2 restrictive requirements, such as requiring
3 verification letters written only by doctors from
4 North Dakota.

5 The committee learned that North Dakota's
6 analysis of impediments to fair housing indicated that
7 there is insufficient access to affordable and
8 accessible housing.

9 Despite the fact that North Dakota has
10 public assistance protections, North Dakota landlords
11 often do not accept vouchers, which makes finding
12 affordable housing extremely difficult.

13 Another barrier to affordable housing is
14 the use of credit scores for screening applicants,
15 despite the fact that a low credit score is not a
16 negative indicator for rent payment.

17 Panelists -- importantly, panelists
18 discussed the need for more attorneys that focus on
19 public interest law in North Dakota. And, that the
20 current lack of legal support for complainants leads
21 to low damages for victims of discrimination.

22 It is noted that sometimes complaints are
23 -- fair housing complaints are settled for,
24 conciliated for as little as \$500 or another minimal
25 amount even for property managers that repeatedly

1 violate the Fair Housing Act.

2 Lack of legal expertise means that most
3 cases go through the administrative process and the
4 lack of judicial precedence contributes to the low
5 remedies.

6 This can make victims of discrimination
7 apathetic to the complaint process and feel it is not
8 worth it to suggest it. Moreover, low damages do not
9 incentivize property owners to change their
10 discriminatory policy or practices.

11 In general, the committee found that there
12 is great need for fair housing education. And, that
13 is twofold, as it applies to both educating landlords
14 and how they can be held accountable if they do not
15 follow the Fair Housing Act, and, for tenants so that
16 they know their rights and how to exercise them.

17 Education really is the key to
18 enforcement. The need to enhance civil rights
19 understanding and demonstrate to housing providers and
20 housing consumers that bad actors will be held
21 accountable for discriminatory practices.

22 And, some panelists argued that the North
23 Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights often
24 lacks resources to conduct proper investigations,
25 forcing them only to interview complainants and

1 respondents, rather than doing more robust
2 investigations.

3 So, our committee had a few
4 recommendations. Under enforcement, the committee's
5 recommendations included increasing penalties for
6 housing discrimination. They must be severe enough to
7 command the attention of landlords.

8 Punishment of violators will deter repeat
9 offenders and also warn other landlords or housing
10 providers the consequences of noncompliance with the
11 law.

12 The North Dakota Department of Labor and
13 Human Rights is charged with investigating complaints
14 of discrimination in the areas of housing as well as
15 increasing public awareness and conducting training
16 around these issues.

17 In order to carry out these
18 responsibilities effectively, the committee recommends
19 that the Department should have additional funding to
20 support the hiring and training of more investigators
21 and outreach staff.

22 And then, under enforcement, the final
23 recommendation is that the North Dakota Century Code
24 47.1607 should be amended to remove the ability to
25 charge individuals convicted of a felony offense up to

1 two months' rent as a security deposit.

2 Under recommendations under affordability,
3 is that there should be increased investments in
4 affordable and accessible housing in North Dakota that
5 is integrated with the general population.

6 And then finally, our recommendations
7 under education and training, first, North Dakota
8 should establish a statewide rental registry or
9 licensure that would facilitate fair housing outreach
10 and education for landlords.

11 This registry should include large and
12 small landlords and should identify if and when
13 they've had fair housing training.

14 Another education recommendation is
15 increasing education about fair housing rights at all
16 levels. The committee recommends that the North
17 Dakota Department of Public Instruction partner with
18 nonprofit organizations to adapt current education
19 programs to include civil rights curriculum starting
20 in early childhood education and continuing into
21 middle and secondary school.

22 Another education recommendation is that
23 the State of Recommendations set aside funds to
24 incentivize the University of North Dakota's School of
25 Law to enhance their civil rights and fair housing

1 curriculum. This will help develop civil rights and
2 public interest attorneys that might increase damages
3 to plaintiffs who bring fair housing complaints.

4 And then, our final recommendation under
5 education, is that the State of North Dakota should
6 partner with nonprofits and tribal leaders to provide
7 comprehensive fair housing training to the community.

8 Violation of housing laws will not be
9 resolved if consumers do not know their rights and if
10 providers do not understand their responsibilities
11 under these housing laws.

12 Thank you for your time. Please let me
13 know if you have any questions.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Well, thank you so much for
15 that robust presentation of your investigation and
16 findings and recommendations.

17 I'm just going to take a -- and, this
18 isn't really a question more than a comment. I find
19 it really fascinating that there's an issue with, that
20 the requirement with regards to criminal background is
21 also including arrest records.

22 You know, I'm a Texan. I used to practice
23 a little bit of criminal defense law. But, in Texas,
24 you know, your arrest record kind of stays frozen,
25 even if you're, even if you're ultimately exonerated

1 or the charges are dropped. You still have to go
2 through a process of expunging your record in order to
3 remove that arrest.

4 I don't know if you know the answer, if
5 that is the situation there. But, to me that's just
6 a, you know, that's a problem. It appears to be an
7 issue.

8 MS. RYDZ: Yes, it is. The arrest records
9 stay on the records as well.

10 CHAIR GARZA: Yeah. Regardless of whether
11 or not you've been --

12 MS. RYDZ: Yes. You've received a
13 conviction. Exactly. Yes.

14 CHAIR GARZA: So, I'll open it up to
15 others. If other Commissioners would like to ask
16 questions of Chair Rydz?

17 I see Commissioner Adams has raised his
18 hand.

19 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Thank you, Chair
20 Garza. I -- Commissioner, thanks for your report and
21 all the work.

22 A boring procedural question for you. I
23 noticed that you guys took testimony, I noticed in the
24 footnotes it looks from 2020. Is that right?

25 MS. RYDZ: Yes. That's right.

1 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Did you guys
2 encounter, just procedurally, problems with COVID or
3 something else in the development of the report?

4 So, this is something you guys started a
5 -- it looks like you had hearings in 2020, is that
6 right?

7 Like that -- that's all --

8 MS. RYDZ: That's correct. Right in the
9 midst of COVID. Exactly. The report was published --
10 you know, so once we got the report in, you know, the
11 commission, you know, staff worked on it and then got
12 it out.

13 And, I want to think it came out in 2022,
14 maybe. So, yes. So, that's -- and, there have been
15 changes, right.

16 So, I wasn't able to talk about all of the
17 items in the report, because there was, you know, sort
18 of a lot of the executive orders that people addressed
19 were -- have been replaced or changed or are under
20 review again.

21 So, I just kind of talked about what was
22 happening in North Dakota at that time, you know, in
23 regard to kind of more -- well, there was the
24 disparate impact maybe with criminal backgrounds.
25 But, basically just for treatment issues.

1 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Thank you.

2 CHAIR GARZA: This is Chair Garza. Are
3 there any other questions from Commissioners?

4 Okay. Hearing none, if there are no
5 further questions, then we'll move onto our next
6 agenda item.

7 I just want to say thank you so much,
8 Chair Rydz for your service and leadership on the
9 North Dakota Advisory Committee, and for taking the
10 time to present your work to us today.

11 MS. RYDZ: Thank you very much for having
12 me. Bye bye.

13 CHAIR GARZA: Bye. So, our second
14 presenter is Pennsylvania Advisory Committee Chair
15 Steven Irwin who will present their report on
16 affirmatively furthering fair housing, an analysis of
17 fair housing access and zoning practices in
18 Pennsylvania.

19 This advisory committee report highlights
20 requesting civil rights challenges within housing
21 policies and practices across the state of
22 Pennsylvania.

23 The report's thorough investigation into
24 implications of zoning laws and municipal ordinances
25 on housing discrimination presents a critical

1 contribution to this ongoing dialog on civil rights in
2 the realm of fair housing.

3 So, we look forward to hearing from you
4 about the disparities the committee uncovered and the
5 bipartisan recommendations that are equitable in the
6 face of evolving housing challenges.

7 Chair Irwin, welcome. The floor is yours.

8 C. BUSINESS MEETING

9 1. PRESENTATION BY STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10 CHAIRS ON REPORTS AND RELATED MEMORANDUM:

11 b. CHAIR STEVEN IRWIN, PENNSYLVANIA

12 ADVISORY COMMITTEE, "AFFIRMATIVELY

13 FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING: AN ANALYSIS

14 OF FAIR HOUSING ACCESS & ZONING

15 PRACTICES IN PENNSYLVANIA

16 MR. IRWIN: Thank you, Chair Garza. Chair
17 Garza, Members of the Commission, my fellow SAC Chairs
18 and staff and guests.

19 There are a few things more essential to
20 a person's lived experience and opportunity or a
21 community's well-being than housing. It impacts long
22 term health, education, the transfer of generational
23 wealth, and it facilitates economic mobility.

24 Upon the Commission's appointment of our
25 Pennsylvania Advisory Committee, we set out to

1 determine which civil rights challenges to study.
2 And, after consideration of a plethora of proposals,
3 we narrowed it to three very hot topics that most, if
4 not all of us, had interest in.

5 We employed a creative public process in
6 finally arriving at our decision on what to study. I
7 can discuss those mechanics in greater length if you
8 wish. But, in any event, they're reflected in our
9 minutes, which are available to you.

10 Ultimately, we agreed to analyze fair
11 housing access and zoning practices in Pennsylvania in
12 light of the federal mandate to affirmatively further
13 fair housing in our country.

14 From the outset, I believe it's fair to
15 say that the members of the SAC agreed that there's a
16 lack of affordable housing in Pennsylvania.

17 And, that those in need include people
18 among us protected because, among other things, of
19 their color, their disabilities, or their age. Our
20 investigation confirmed those facts.

21 In addition to the topic being inherently
22 compelling, it's one where our members had significant
23 experience in their professional, civil, volunteer,
24 and personal pursuits.

25 Now, we didn't agree on everything. And,

1 we have two thoughtful concurring statements appended
2 to our final report. But, we did produce a report
3 proudly without any dissents.

4 As you well know, the federal government
5 has the responsibility of affirmatively furthering the
6 purposes of fair housing, a responsibility which is
7 repositied with the United States Department of Housing
8 and Urban Development.

9 But, simply prohibiting overt
10 discrimination is not enough. Discriminatory impact
11 on protected classes of facially neutral policies is
12 considered illegally discriminatory under federal law.

13 We heard from seven panels of four to five
14 presenters during public hearings convened between
15 March and November 2022. We received presentations
16 from a comprehensive array of speakers on the subject,
17 with the exception of private developers who were less
18 represented than we had initially sought.

19 And, here's what we found. There's a
20 significantly higher private lending -- amount of
21 private lending in non-minority neighborhoods.

22 White home-ownership is largely supported
23 by the private lending market, which participates in
24 the financing of homes for people of color to a lesser
25 extent. Black homeowners often have less private

1 capital and are likely to rely on government sources
2 of housing support.

3 In recent years, private lending has
4 created or preserved three times as many housing units
5 as the public sector.

6 Our investigation showed that efforts to
7 meet the needs of people seeking affordable housing
8 who are disproportionately black, have not kept pace
9 with the increasing availability of financing for
10 those seeking market rate housing, which is
11 predominantly white.

12 When it comes to aging Americans, we found
13 that there is insufficient funding to enable existing
14 occupants of affordable housing to make the
15 improvements and modifications which would accommodate
16 their evolving abilities to age in place.

17 In so far as disabled individuals of any
18 age are concerned, there is a deficient supply of
19 affordable accessible housing that can accommodate
20 disabled individuals in our population who seek it.

21 Pennsylvania has the third largest rural
22 population in America. So, our investigation
23 naturally delved into that swath of our residents.

24 We learned that housing complaints in
25 rural Pennsylvania are difficult to track. They are

1 not stored in a centralized database that allows for
2 easy comparison with more urban areas.

3 As a consequence, it's very, very
4 difficult to get a firm grasp on the presence or
5 magnitude of civil rights concerns in housing, as it
6 impacts one in five Pennsylvanians.

7 We did explore housing lenders and
8 providers. We found that they may not even be aware
9 that their practices have a discriminatory impact.
10 Although, the statistics show that their practices do
11 result in disparate treatment for the population
12 experience.

13 Now, under existing funding levels, HUD
14 doesn't have the resources to investigate large
15 numbers of claims to see if racial animus motivated
16 the behavior of landlords and lenders. And,
17 individual litigation isn't feasible.

18 At the same time, the structure in place
19 in Pennsylvania, such as local housing ordinances that
20 are legal here, erect hurdles to aspiring renters and
21 homeowners who must rely on housing choice options.

22 To further illustrate the problem, many
23 municipalities still maintain nuisance ordinances that
24 permit or require landlords to evict tenants for
25 making too many calls for emergency services. This

1 jeopardizes women who maybe experiencing domestic
2 violence and other victims of violent crimes as well.

3 We were told that applicants for rental
4 units who have been named in eviction filings,
5 routinely are denied housing, even if a court
6 ultimately doesn't issue a final judgment against
7 them.

8 And, we found that people with arrest
9 records or a criminal history are also routinely
10 denied housing access, which has the potential to
11 perpetuate ongoing racial disparities in the criminal
12 justice system.

13 Finally, because there's no right to
14 counsel for families facing eviction, tenants come to
15 these hearings unprepared and uninformed about their
16 rights and responsibilities.

17 On the other hand, landlords enter with a
18 significant advantage. This head start can lead to
19 home insecurity for individuals who should not be
20 experiencing it.

21 On the basis of these findings and the
22 presentations that were underpinning them, our report
23 to you makes a number of recommendations. Here's a
24 few.

25 To HUD, we recommend that the Commission

1 impress upon HUD to direct more resources to
2 enforcement of the laws already on the books. And,
3 that you encourage HUD to increase its dissemination
4 of educational materials for mortgage lenders, banks,
5 landlords, municipalities, and consumers regarding
6 their duties to meet their fair housing obligations.

7 To Congress, we recommend that the
8 Commission implore Congress to repeal the law that
9 denies access to federally assisted housing for a
10 minimum of three years, for the entire household, if
11 any member has been evicted for a drug related crime.

12 And, that Congress codify right to counsel
13 for individuals facing foreclosure or eviction from a
14 federally assisted housing unit.

15 To the Pennsylvania General Assembly, we
16 recommend that the Commission encourage the
17 legislature to incentivize inclusionary zoning in
18 order to increase housing supply. To collect
19 comprehensive data, investigate, and measure housing
20 disparities in rural Pennsylvania.

21 We recommend that you direct and encourage
22 the Pennsylvania legislature to increase -- to provide
23 the resources to increase the use of mediation to
24 address and avoid foreclosures and evictions. And
25 finally, to codify a right to counsel for individuals

1 facing foreclosure or eviction.

2 I comment to each of you and those who
3 understand how transformative housing infrastructure
4 can be and the Pennsylvania Advisory Committee to
5 illuminate its report and our policy brief.

6 On behalf of an incredibly illustrated and
7 dedicated group of people who serve on the
8 Pennsylvania Advisory Committee to the Commission and
9 the outstanding staff who you've graciously assigned
10 to support our work, please permit me to thank you for
11 this opportunity to share our findings, our
12 conclusions and our recommendations with respect to
13 the civil rights concerns we've identified in fair
14 housing.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIR GARZA: This is Chair Garza. Thank
17 you so much, Chair Irwin. We now have some time for
18 Commissioner questions.

19 I see Commissioner Magpantay. Go ahead.

20 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Hi Chair. Thank
21 you so much for coming. I had the pleasure of
22 actually visiting with the Pennsylvania Advisory
23 Committee.

24 And, your Vice Chair, for my colleagues,
25 may remember, or remind them, who actually attended

1 one of our hearings at the Commission. So, we were
2 delighted to have your participation.

3 I very much applaud this work. I enjoyed
4 reading in detail the report and the recommendations.
5 I also appreciated the inclusion of the concurring
6 statement.

7 And, I did see that -- well, the
8 concurring statement talks about incorporating
9 industry, banks, and lenders into the recommendations,
10 which I would actually agree, in addressing
11 discrimination and discriminatory practices. I think
12 we all have a say in working together.

13 May I just ask, because I didn't -- in my
14 version, I don't think I saw the transcript. Did the
15 Commission, I saw that you tried to get industry
16 representation, is that they were not -- and lenders
17 and realtors, did you not get as many?

18 Or, did they have differences of opinion?
19 Just a little bit more about that.

20 MR. IRWIN: Yeah, that's --

21 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: What was your
22 exact finding?

23 MR. IRWIN: That's a great question,
24 Commissioner Magpantay. And, I want to tell all the
25 Commissioners how much we appreciated your presence

1 and visiting with our commission members.

2 It was, it really was a highlight for us.
3 And, really helped focus our efforts, because we all
4 have ADD when it comes to civil rights concerns. So,
5 thanks so much.

6 And, Romana Lee-Akiyama, who's been a long
7 time member of the committee, who's the Vice Chair,
8 has been really fantastic in helping to bring
9 consensus. And, she did have the opportunity to come
10 to a meeting in person. Which I hope to do at some
11 point as well.

12 The -- yeah, the -- yes, the, you know,
13 the concurring opinions are concurring. They're not
14 dissenting. And, I think everyone agrees with that.

15 We do need private industry to come
16 forward and be part of the solution and not part of
17 the problem. We did invite various developers.

18 We did get some representatives of
19 developers who knew a lot about development but not as
20 many that -- we had invited a number, and they just
21 were unwilling to sort of come forward.

22 Or, I don't know why. Obviously, they
23 don't want to identify any practices that might draw
24 the attention of HUD or otherwise. So, I can't give
25 you a complete explanation as to why. But, that's

1 important.

2 I think that our report, like Chair Rydz's
3 report, does call on increased dissemination of
4 materials to bankers and lenders and those involved in
5 providing and creating that fair housing
6 infrastructure, so that they're aware of, you know,
7 what they're doing.

8 The statistics bear out the disparities.
9 But, it does not necessarily prove that there's racial
10 animus or ill intent.

11 But, when you're aware of what you're
12 doing, maybe you become more, you affirmatively go out
13 to try to provide opportunity to those who are not
14 maybe getting their fair share of the pie.

15 So, that's our -- that's our hope that we
16 can improve, achieve that by greater information in
17 the marketplace.

18 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Great. Very much
19 appreciate that. And, just again, thank you for your
20 support.

21 For my colleagues on the Commission, for
22 my fellow Commissioners, I just want to draw your
23 attention to page 45 to 9, 45 to 49, there are
24 recommendations that we as a United States Commission
25 could take up. They seem to be great.

UNEDITED

1 Would love to have a conversation. Not at
2 this time, but in the future, on implementation and
3 adopting some of these recommendations that you have
4 made to the full Commission on Civil Rights.

5 Thank you so much.

6 MR. IRWIN: Thank you, Commissioner.

7 Thank you so much.

8 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Madam Chair,
9 Gilchrist here.

10 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, Commissioner Gilchrist,
11 if you wouldn't mind, I see that Commissioner, that
12 Vice Commissioner Nourse raised her hand.

13 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Sure.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Is that okay? We'll go to

15 --

16 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: No, that's
17 perfectly fine.

18 CHAIR GARZA: Her and then we'll go to
19 you. Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Perfectly fine,
21 Madam Chair. Absolutely.

22 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Thank you, Chair
23 Garza. Can you hear me?

24 MR. IRWIN: I can hear you, Commissioner
25 Nourse.

1 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Okay. Thank you,
2 Mr. Irwin. And, thank you, Commissioner Gilchrist for
3 pausing.

4 This will just be a brief intervention
5 following on my friend Commissioner Magpantay's
6 question. Which is, but, getting business in the room
7 is really important.

8 And so, I think that a lot of people just
9 don't understand what's going on in these far-flung
10 complex systems largely run by algorithms and a whole
11 bunch of other things.

12 Case in point, the IRS recently found that
13 it was auditing those --

14 MR. IRWIN: I cannot hear you.

15 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Can people hear me?

16 MR. IRWIN: Now I hear you. Okay, you're
17 coming in now.

18 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: I'm coming in and
19 out?

20 MR. IRWIN: Go ahead. I can hear you now.

21 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Okay. Let me see if
22 I can increase my audio here. Hello, can you hear me?

23 MR. IRWIN: I hear you now.

24 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: All right. So, the
25 question is about getting business in the room and

1 getting them information, because the information can
2 be transformative.

3 I understand why they wouldn't want to
4 admit to practices that could then come to haunt them.
5 And, their general counsel is probably telling them
6 that.

7 But, and I also think it's very important
8 what you noted about Pennsylvania being a rural state.
9 Working in the Senate many years ago, I learned how
10 many rural states there are, including your neighbor,
11 Delaware.

12 And, I also think that this is an urgent
13 need. And, I just want to emphasize something that
14 was also suggested by the North Dakota report, which
15 is, for you all to think of a follow on partnership
16 with the many wonderful law schools in your state.

17 And, I teach, as does Commissioner Heriot.
18 And, they're great sources of information, eager
19 graduates who want to actually learn something about
20 the real world.

21 And, they could be a conduit either to
22 business or to partnering with people with fewer
23 resources, out in the rural areas, to collect data.
24 And, these young people are very imaginative.

25 So, working on those two things, I think,

1 is really important moving forward. And, I just want
2 to thank you for all of your effort.

3 As you say, if you don't have a safe
4 house, the rest of it doesn't really feel very good.
5 So, I appreciate that.

6 And, I hand this over to Commissioner
7 Gilchrist.

8 MR. IRWIN: If I may, Vice Chair Nourse.

9 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Sure.

10 MR. IRWIN: I just wanted to build on that
11 just for a second. The -- you heard in our -- we made
12 the recommendation that there be a right to counsel in
13 these eviction proceedings, for all the reasons that
14 when you have counsel, these proceedings can go much
15 more streamlined and people can be aware of their
16 rights and responsibilities.

17 And, you know, obviously that would be an
18 expensive undertaking for any municipality or state.
19 And, we have that now in Philadelphia. It's working
20 well.

21 And, the law schools are really a great
22 place for free clinics. And, otherwise, to give law
23 students the opportunity to get into court.

24 But, also to master an area of the law,
25 maybe even go into it in their practice after

1 graduation. And, could provide tenants and those who
2 have been, or threatened with eviction, with the kind
3 of legal support they need to perhaps prevent them
4 from becoming more home insecure.

5 CHAIR GARZA: Great. Well, thank you for
6 that, Chair Irwin. We'll go ahead and give it over to
7 Commissioner Gilchrist to ask his question.

8 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Thank you, Madam
9 Chair and Vice Chair Nourse for allowing me to
10 comment. Chairman Irwin, let me thank you also for
11 this very fine report.

12 I happen to have been the chairman of a
13 zoning commission in South Carolina for about eight
14 years. And, I found your report to be quite
15 informative and some very good considerations with
16 regard to some of the findings.

17 One question I have for you, you know,
18 with zoning laws being so varied across local --
19 localities across the country, in your research, did
20 you find whether or not there could potentially be a
21 way where we could concretely determine that some of
22 these practices are furthermore disparities or
23 possibly eliminating them?

24 Is there any way that we could come up
25 with some type of comprehensive way, you think, that

1 we could address this in the country?

2 MR. IRWIN: Well, Mr. Gilchrist, you're --
3 you know, you hit the nail on the head. I mean, one
4 of the beauties of having all these municipalities is
5 that you may have some that do innovative things that
6 others can build on and stop any disparities.

7 You know, in terms of determining whether
8 in fact the disparities are due, especially in rural
9 America, rural Pennsylvania, you have -- you can
10 assign many reasons for the problems that you're
11 having in this way.

12 Anything from opioid epidemic to
13 educational disparities or just economic empowerment.
14 There's a lot of different reasons for that.

15 So, sometimes a good local solution that's
16 tailored to what's going on in that municipality is
17 the best way to approach it.

18 Having said that, you know, the local
19 control allows for abuse. And, the best way to do
20 that is to increase as North Dakota suggested,
21 resources with HUD to go and do testing, more
22 auditing, more surprise audits, and to do the kind of
23 investigations that will show, you know, what's
24 happening.

25 Because if you, you know, sunlight's a

1 great disinfectant. And, if you can show what's
2 happening and make people aware of it, and then take
3 strong action against them, it will be a real
4 deterrent to others from perpetuating the same kind of
5 practices.

6 So, you know, that -- I don't know if that
7 answers your question. But, I think it's a good, a
8 good step forward in doing it.

9 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Well, no, it
10 does. And, I appreciate that. And, it is certainly
11 a challenge, no question about it.

12 We -- in South Carolina, I led our state
13 through a reorganization of our code that had not been
14 updated within 30 years. So, you can imagine what
15 the, some of the interesting takeaways from some of
16 that.

17 But, no. I appreciate that perspective.
18 And, certainly look forward to working with you as our
19 Commission determines how we will address this at our
20 level.

21 So, thank you so much, Madam Chair, for
22 the opportunity to comment.

23 MR. IRWIN: Madam Chair, if I can just
24 respond to that for a second?

25 CHAIR GARZA: Of course, Chairman.

1 MR. IRWIN: Thank you. I, you know, some
2 of the disparities that we found mirrored the kind of
3 disparities that existed when there were more, what's
4 the word?

5 You know, they wanted something to hide
6 them, you know, red-lining that was legislated, that
7 is no longer permitted, had disparities which now
8 continue and persist, but un -- without them.

9 And so, it's a -- it's a very difficult
10 problem that we've got here. And anyway, I appreciate
11 your comments. Thanks.

12 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: No. Thank you.
13 I appreciate that as well. And, thank you, Madam
14 Chair.

15 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful. Well, thank you
16 so much, Chair Irwin. Are there any other questions
17 from Commissioners for Chair Irwin?

18 Hearing none and seeing none, thank you so
19 much for your time. We really appreciate the report
20 that you all have put together and it was just
21 wonderful to hear it in connection with Chair Rydz's
22 report on unfair housing.

23 And so, with that, we're going to go ahead
24 and move onto our final advisory committee presenter.
25 It's the Reverend Dr. Donnie Anderson on behalf of the

1 Rhode Island Advisory Committee, who will present on
2 licensing barriers to employment post-conviction in
3 Rhode Island.

4 This pivotal report sheds light on the
5 substantial hurdles faced by formerly incarcerated
6 individuals in securing occupational licenses, an
7 essential part of achieving meaningful employment and
8 reintegrating into society.

9 The report details the way that formerly
10 incarcerated people in Rhode Island are excluded from
11 economic opportunities to participate in society once
12 released, with a particular focus on race.

13 This report also helps us understand the
14 systemic barriers that perpetuate cycles of poverty
15 and recidivism and can aid us in evaluating how we
16 address these issues.

17 I am looking forward to hearing from the
18 advisory committee's unanimous bipartisan
19 recommendation that offer a great roadmap for a more
20 equitable and inclusive workforce that respects and
21 protects the civil rights of all individuals,
22 regardless of their past.

23 So, with that, I'm going to turn it over
24 to Reverend Anderson. The floor is yours.

25 C. BUSINESS MEETING

1 1. PRESENTATION BY STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2 CHAIRS ON REPORTS AND RELATED MEMORANDUM:

3 c. REV. DR. DONNIE ANDERSON, MEMBER,

4 RHODE ISLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE,

5 "LICENSING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

6 POST-CONVICTION IN RHODE ISLAND

7 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Thank you. Am I
8 coming through okay?

9 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Yes, we can hear you
10 perfectly.

11 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you. Let
12 me begin by expressing my gratitude for the
13 opportunity to be part of the state advisory committee
14 here in Rhode Island.

15 I want to add my deep appreciation for all
16 who contributed to this report, the leadership of our
17 chair, Margaux Morisseau, and for the work of
18 commission intern, Lucia De La Roca, for her
19 leadership and work on this project.

20 I'm grateful for the opportunity to
21 participate in this particular study. It is in
22 society's best interest to have the highest percentage
23 of our population engaged in meaningful employment.

24 Although appropriate licensing
25 requirements make sense in many professions,

1 inappropriate barriers to licensing can work against
2 the greatest good of society. Our inquiries sought to
3 undertake a study of licensing barriers to employment
4 post-conviction in Rhode Island, related to civil
5 rights concerns.

6 Although all formerly incarcerated people
7 can be impacted by licensing barriers to employment,
8 people of color, especially black and brown people of
9 color are disproportionately affected by these
10 barriers to full citizenship as they are over-
11 represented in the criminal justice system.

12 The current system for obtaining
13 occupational licenses were examined as one potential
14 barrier towards the successful reentry of post-
15 conviction. We held three sessions to receive
16 testimony. One on April 30, 2019, one on May 20, 2020,
17 and one in 2000 -- excuse me, one on June 30, 2020.

18 We choose this issue because it was
19 significant but substantially unaddressed and it was
20 the subject of legislation before the Rhode Island
21 General Assembly. Community groups have been raising
22 this issue for some time and this seemed like an
23 appropriate moment to bring attention to the civil
24 rights implications of the existing licensing
25 regulations.

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As you will note from the testimony in the report, we sought to speak to community groups, legal advocacy groups, the legislature, and the Attorney General of the State of Rhode Island.

Although there were no totally unexpected issues raised during our investigation, the depth of the civil rights infringements on existing licensing procedures was even more significant than previously expected.

Two individuals brought testimony who were particularly helpful in this way. The first was Alicia Ailes, a staff member of the community group and is referenced often in the report for her extensive and detailed analysis of the existing circumstances, particularly license application denials on the subject to moral turpitude or moral character assessments that were not well defined.

Perhaps the most powerful testimony came from the Rhode Island Attorney General, Peter Neronha, a former U.S. Attorney for Rhode Island. Neronha brought both a federal and state perspective to the issue.

His experience providing expungement clinics and working within the justice system brought with him the breadth and depth of knowledge that was

1 most impactful.

2 Neronha said in his testimony when
3 referring to existing licensing requirements that they
4 were very stringent. And, in his view, there are
5 people who could be working in many different
6 capacities and many different occupations
7 unnecessarily.

8 He went on to say referring to the
9 American criminal justice system, I don't think anyone
10 who has been involved in it, certainly as long as I
11 have been, can comfortably say that there is no
12 systemic racism in our criminal justice system. I
13 think the results and the numbers bear that out.

14 Our report mentions right in the
15 legislative session of 2020, the Rhode Island General
16 Assembly passed the Fair Chance Licensing Bill.
17 There's no question that the timing of our
18 investigation, highlighting the need for reform,
19 played a significant role in the passage of this
20 legislation.

21 What we could not have anticipated was the
22 extent to which the COVID epidemic would impact the
23 implementation of this legislation.

24 In our recommendations, we recommend that
25 the Commission make recommendations to the Rhode

1 Island Legislature, the Rhode Island Department of
2 Labor and Training, and the Rhode Island Department of
3 Education.

4 The recommendations to the Rhode Island
5 Department of Labor and Training and the Rhode Island
6 Department of Education consists mainly of
7 recommendations related to education and
8 communication.

9 Although these recommendations remain
10 important, the recommendations to the legislature are
11 particularly important at this time. Primarily
12 because of the impact of COVID, there appear to be
13 questions about how well the new regulations will have
14 been implemented and communicated.

15 We are especially concerned about the
16 regulation that was established regarding the
17 collection of data related to people who have been
18 denied licenses.

19 I hope you'll be able to follow through on
20 our recommendations and copy Attorney General Neronha
21 with these recommendations in order that you might
22 also help to oversee and make sure that these
23 recommendations are followed.

24 Thank you so much.

25 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much, Reverend

1 Dr. Anderson. Are there any questions from
2 Commissioners for Reverend Dr. Anderson?

3 I see Commissioner Magpantay has raised
4 his hand.

5 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Hi Reverend.
6 And, thank you so much for your service. It was a
7 great report. I read it very carefully.

8 I'm actually very familiar with Rhode
9 Island, particularly the growing Southeast Asian and
10 Cambodian community in the Woonsocket/Providence area,
11 right off of the exit.

12 And, I was wondering -- so, that community
13 talked about challenges with juvenile records. Young
14 people, young Southeast Asians who got involved in
15 gangs and then led to maybe criminal conviction. But
16 again, it was juveniles, these proceedings.

17 So, I was wondering, did you have any
18 opportunity to look at Southeast Asians who were
19 particular to the -- to Rhode Island?

20 Or, those with juvenile records in
21 obtaining licensing barriers to employment?

22 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Thank you,
23 Commissioner, for that question. First of all, it
24 certainly reflects an understanding of the situation
25 we face here, especially in the metropolitan

1 Providence area.

2 We did not look at any specific issues
3 related to the Southeast Asian community. Although,
4 because of my work here in Rhode Island, I'm familiar
5 with the gang issue and the fact that that leads to
6 arrest, conviction, and incarceration, which
7 ultimately will impact them as they seek to find
8 employment.

9 You know, for example, we have examples of
10 people who maybe ten years before have been guilty of
11 stealing a car and now are having difficulties getting
12 a license to be a hairdresser. You know, which has no
13 reasonable connection at all.

14 And so, the answer to your question is, we
15 did not specifically look at that population.
16 Although that population is certainly included in the
17 broader perspective that we presented.

18 And, the legislation that passed, if
19 implemented, and this is the big issue for us at this
20 point, is the implementation of what is basically a
21 good legislation. But, we believe has yet to really
22 be implemented.

23 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Very good. Thank
24 you very much. I appreciate that.

25 CHAIR GARZA: This is Chair Garza. I just

1 kind of wanted to tease out, because this came up in
2 one of the other presentations for North Dakota on
3 arrest records.

4 If you could just kind of tease out for us
5 more information on what does that look like? If
6 you've ever been arrested in Rhode Island for a crime,
7 and then you are not ultimately convicted of that
8 crime, it still impacts your ability to get a license.

9 Is that correct? And, if you can kind of
10 flesh that out for us and what that looks like.

11 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Sure. I'm glad to
12 speak to that. And, thank you for raising it. I'm
13 just not sure, I wasn't too sure how much detail to
14 add to, you know, the report, because I realize you're
15 listening to three reports today.

16 The reality is, we do have an issue here
17 where often, depending on who produces the report
18 whether it's a local police department or some other
19 department that produces a report, often arrests that
20 do not result in convictions, are still hanging on in
21 those reports.

22 And, there are some attempts to clean that
23 up. But, we have not been successful in eliminating
24 that.

25 I also serve as the co-chair of the State

1 Commission on Prejudice and Bias. And, we're working
2 with law enforcement and with the Attorney General's
3 Office to try to clean that up a little bit, so that
4 all that's represented are convictions.

5 And, that's part of the impetus of this
6 legislation that was passed. So, that is still an
7 ongoing issue and one that we need to work on in terms
8 of really getting a fair shake for folks.

9 And, I think there was a second part to
10 your question, which I'm not recalling.

11 CHAIR GARZA: No, I just, it was more
12 about that. And, kind of teasing out this issue that
13 happens with, you know, with being arrested but not
14 ultimately convicted.

15 I imagine also, there's a process for
16 expunging your record. In Texas it is, you have to
17 employ a private attorney. That that's not something
18 that a court-appointed attorney could help you with.

19 And, I don't know if that is, if that is
20 similar in Rhode Island.

21 REV. DR. ANDERSON: We addressed that some
22 in the report. Attorney General Neronha has taken his
23 staff out into the community, places where that are
24 zip codes that have high numbers of people who have
25 been formerly incarcerated, and holding expungement

1 clinics.

2 And, actually helping people fill out the
3 paperwork and get that paperwork submitted. One of
4 the problems is, there's a \$100 submission fee. And,
5 for many people in those circumstances, that \$100 fee
6 is a significant barrier to getting the expungement
7 off their records.

8 And so, the Attorney General's Office has
9 made some effort in that area. But, it too continues
10 to be an ongoing issue for many of our formerly
11 incarcerated individuals.

12 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much for
13 providing some more details on that. And, you know,
14 I think I've been focusing in on, you know, folks that
15 are not ultimately convicted of a crime.

16 And, the only reason I'm doing that is
17 because I think it just, it broadens the issue. You
18 know, if you're formerly incarcerated, you know, if
19 you can't get a -- the example that you gave us
20 earlier about getting a hairdresser's license.

21 But, if you have a conviction for stealing
22 a car from years ago, I mean, that's a barrier to
23 being able to work and produce for your family. And,
24 produce for yourself and turn your life around.
25 Right.

1 But, I also see this underlying issue that
2 has been happening with people that are arrested, that
3 have contact with the criminal justice system but
4 don't ultimately become -- don't ultimately get
5 convicted.

6 And so, I just -- the reason I've been
7 talking about it, or asking about it, is because I
8 just feel like it broadens the problem. And, if we
9 can start to address these issues, you know, we can
10 get to a better situation for folks.

11 So, I genuinely appreciate your time here
12 and what you've added to this conversation. I'm going
13 to open it up to others.

14 I mean, if there are any other
15 Commissioners that have a question here, and --

16 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Could I just -- could
17 I just respond to your point just one more second
18 about this?

19 CHAIR GARZA: Oh, of course. Of course.

20 REV. DR. ANDERSON: And, this is one of
21 the reasons why this legislation was so important and
22 why the implementation of the changes is so important.

23 Because the vast majority, many, many of
24 these licensing requirements have this very subjective
25 standard of moral turpitude or moral character.

1 And, this is where the report that gave
2 information on arrest that didn't lead to conviction,
3 could be used by people to point to an issue regarding
4 moral character. And, just highlights the unfairness.

5 And so, your attention to the reality that
6 not all criminal reports are the same, and depending
7 on what -- who issues those reports can really make a
8 big difference if there isn't a stringent requirement
9 for the standards of these licensings.

10 So, I just wanted to highlight that. That
11 that was one of the reasons why we felt this law was
12 important. And, it came through very much in our
13 testimony we heard.

14 And, why we're very concerned about the
15 implementation, because COVID just threw such a
16 monkey-wrench in all of that.

17 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for highlighting
18 that. I see Vice Chair Nourse has her hand up.

19 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Yes. Very quickly,
20 Reverend Dr. can you hear me?

21 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Yes, I can. Thank
22 you.

23 COMMISSIONER NOURSE: Well, you know, in
24 my other life I'm a law professor. So, I'm going to
25 give you a little law professor suggestion about crime

1 of moral turpitude.

2 That is a term that has a very long and
3 terrible history in the law. It was used, for
4 example, as a reason to sterilize individuals during
5 the eugenic period at the beginning of the 20th
6 century.

7 It's been used in our immigration law.
8 And, it's entirely vague. It's also been used in
9 three time lose laws over history.

10 So, here's my recommendation. You talk to
11 your Attorney General, who has been a great resource
12 for you, and see if they can't do some work on that
13 term.

14 Because just a little bit of research will
15 show those fine lawyers how that is tied in with a
16 whole bunch of laws that we have now taken off the
17 books. So, that may be a reason for the legislature
18 to revisit it.

19 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Well, thank you. The
20 legislation that was passed does address that issue.
21 My ongoing concern is that because of COVID, the
22 implementation of the new law is not fully present.

23 And so, although I think we have added
24 that in the legislation, it's still hanging around in
25 some of the legisla -- excuse me, the licensing

1 requirements.

2 Because there's so many different agencies
3 that oversee licensing requirements. And, this
4 legislation sought to standardize that.

5 Part of the problem was it's not
6 abundantly clear who really has the responsibility and
7 who actually is going to pay the financing of making
8 sure that these regulations are totally followed
9 through.

10 Well, I won't -- I have a subjective
11 statement that I won't make about how things often
12 happen here in Rhode Island.

13 But, I do think, and let me just reiterate
14 this and then let you go on. Again, so thank you so
15 much for the opportunity to speak to you.

16 But, I do believe that the recommendation
17 we made, especially to the legislature that if you
18 could make that recommendation that has, is outlined
19 -- outlines the collection of data and several other
20 issues, to making sure that there's follow through on
21 that and in copying the Attorney General. That that
22 would really take us a long way to implementing this
23 law to helping people.

24 And, thank you so much for your time today
25 and the generosity of your time.

1 CHAIR GARZA: Well, we appreciate you
2 being here and you presenting on this really important
3 report. And, it has really given us a lot to think
4 about.

5 And, the connection between, you know,
6 licensing requirements and then also as we think about
7 housing. So, it's -- so, thank you again for being
8 here and presenting, Reverend Dr. Anderson.

9 REV. DR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you very
10 much, Chair. Have a good day.

11 CHAIR GARZA: You too. So, hearing no
12 further questions, we're going to go ahead and move on
13 with the agenda.

14 With our last agenda item, which is the
15 Staff Director's report from our Staff Director.
16 Mauro Morales, the floor is yours.

17 D. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

18 STAFF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

19 MR. MORALES: Thank you, Madam Chair. In
20 the interest of time, I have nothing further to add
21 than what is already contained in the report.

22 But, I'm always available to discuss with
23 any Commissioner if they have a specific question
24 about something that's contained in the report.

25 I would like to just kind of take a moment

1 to let Commissioners know that I will be sending out
2 in the next few weeks or days here, a reminder of the
3 process to consider concept papers and reach with some
4 topics for reports in 2025.

5 So, please look out for that. I sent
6 something a few weeks back, and I know we'll be
7 sending something in the coming weeks here. So, we
8 want to do what we can on our part in terms of the
9 staff to assist Commissioners as they, you know, look
10 on this, these matters.

11 Last thing I'd also just like to say, I
12 know many Commissioners will be coming in for the
13 March 8 briefing on artificial intelligence and facial
14 recognition.

15 So, if there's anything you need, you
16 know, while you're here or that we can do to assist
17 Commissioners and your assays, to accommodate you, we
18 will. So, we look forward to you coming on out here
19 in a few weeks, about two weeks, I guess.

20 So, with that, I have nothing further,
21 Madam Chair. And, thank you.

22 E. ADJOURN MEETING

23 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you, Staff Director
24 Morales. And, I look forward to seeing everyone in
25 person and in just two short weeks for our meeting.

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And, I just want to also acknowledge and say thank you to the staff for all their hard work on just moving forward the reports and all of the things that we've needed to get done over the last few months and in getting ready for this facial recognition technology hearing, as well as to your special assistants that have done a lot of work on that front as well.

So, this concludes the business meeting regarding the agenda that we have for today. And, if there is nothing further, I'll go ahead and adjourn the meeting at 10:04 a.m. Central time.

So, thank you to everyone and I hope everyone has a wonderful weekend. I look forward to seeing all of you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 11:04 a.m.)

A

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In the matter of: Business Meeting

Before: US CCR

Date: 02-23-24

Place: teleconference

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