

# **City of Bloomington**

## **Bloomington/Monroe**

### **County Human**

### **Rights Commission**



Bloomington/Monroe County  
Human Rights Commission

# **2024**

## **Annual**

### **Report**

**PREPARED BY :**

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## CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission (BMCHRC) is a seven-member volunteer commission within the City of Bloomington tasked with investigating allegations of discrimination within Bloomington, Indiana, and unincorporated areas of Monroe County. This commission exists to support you if you experience discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, or education. We are honored to serve our community and to present the following annual report for 2024.

Twelve cases were investigated in 2024: five cases from 2023 were closed and seven new cases were opened. Investigating commissioners worked with complainants and respondents to find the truth and reach fair conclusions. These cases are always complex and rarely have clear answers. However, we were able to win substantial monetary settlements for two individuals who had alleged employment discrimination based on their disability and on their race. In other cases, we were able to reach compromises and support complainants to better understand their situations. Descriptions of each case are available in **2024 Investigations** (page 11).

In 2024, we actively embraced our role as advocates. Following an incident of hate speech by a guest at an April 2024 Bloomington City Council meeting, I delivered a statement on behalf of the BMCHRC opposing all forms of hate in our community and publicizing our role as investigators of discrimination. We appeared at several tabling events, such as the Black Market, MCCSC's International Student Welcome, the ADA Anniversary Celebration, and PrideFest. We proposed and supported the passage of Bloomington's Safe Haven Resolution for Transgender Healthcare. More information on some of these activities is found in **Community Engagement** (page 25).

Finally, we look forward to continuing our work in 2025 and advocating for those in our community who are most vulnerable to discrimination, particularly communities of color, the LGBTQ+ community, the immigrant community, and the Muslim and Jewish communities. Our **Strategic Goals** for the next year are found later in this report (page 24).

As I said when I spoke at City Council and at PrideFest about the Safe Haven Resolution for Transgender Healthcare, Bloomington has a long history of being on the right side of history. In 2025, just as in 1975, the Human Rights Commission will fight to guarantee civil rights for everyone in our community.

**Respectfully submitted,**



**Ryne Shadday, Chair**

## COMMISSION PURPOSE

The mission of the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission (BMCHRC) is to enforce the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Ordinance in a fair and timely manner, to educate community members about their rights and responsibilities under various civil rights laws and to advocate for changes in policies and law. The BMCHRC is also responsible for issuing reports and taking appropriate action on bias incidents and hate crimes in our community.

The BMCHRC is established under Bloomington Municipal Code 2.23.100. It is composed of seven volunteer commissioners who investigate allegations of discrimination and civil rights violations and oversee the work of the Commission. The City of Bloomington supports the Commission with a staff liaison, an administrative assistant, and an assistant city attorney.

Commissioners serve two-year terms. Three commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, two by the City Council, and two by the Monroe County Commission. Bloomington's Human Rights Commission has existed since the 1970s and has conducted over 700 formal investigations.

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Ordinance forbids discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, housing status, or status as a veteran, in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education, within the City of Bloomington and unincorporated areas of Monroe County. The activities of the BMCHRC are focused on enforcing this ordinance and combating discrimination in our community.

## COMMISSION OVERVIEW

The seven commissioners of the BMCHRC attend monthly meetings, share information at local events, and investigate allegations of discrimination in a fair, thorough, and unbiased way. Current commissioners are (below, standing, from left to right) **Ryne Shadday, Amy Jackson, Stephen Coover, Autumn Crisovan**, and (seated, from left to right) **Sharon Baker, Emma Williams**, and **Lilliana Young**.



COMMISSIONERS	TERM EXPIRES	APPOINTED BY
Sharon Baker	January 2027	Monroe County Commissioners
Stephen Coover	January 2026	Monroe County Commissioners
Autumn Crisovan (Secretary)	January 2026	Common Council
Amy Jackson	January 2027	Mayor
Ryne Shadday (Chair)	January 2026	Mayor
Emma Williams (Vice Chair)	January 2025	Common Council
Lilliana Young	January 2026	Mayor

### CITY STAFF

Michael Shermis	Human Rights Liaison
Annabelle Vosmeier	Administrative Assistant
Enedina Kassamanian	Assistant City Attorney

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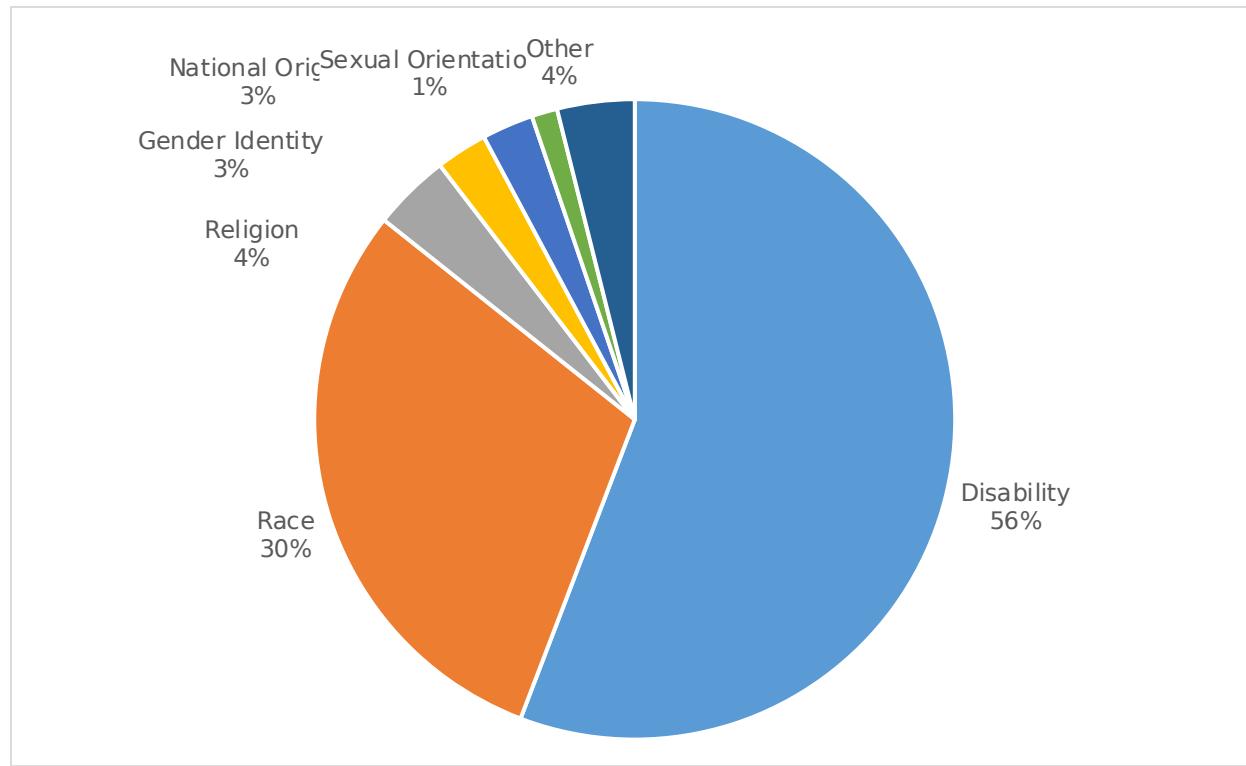
## KEY STATISTICS AND IMPACT

In 2024, the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission (BMCHRC) received 119 contacts, complaints, or incident reports. These inquiries, received via phone, email, or online form, included questions, requests for information, conflict reports, hate incident reports, and allegations of discrimination.

BMCHRC staff responded to each inquiry by answering questions, providing information and guidance, referring individuals to local services, discussing incidents, and opening formal investigations. Significantly more inquiries were received in 2024 than in 2023; however, fewer led to formal investigations.

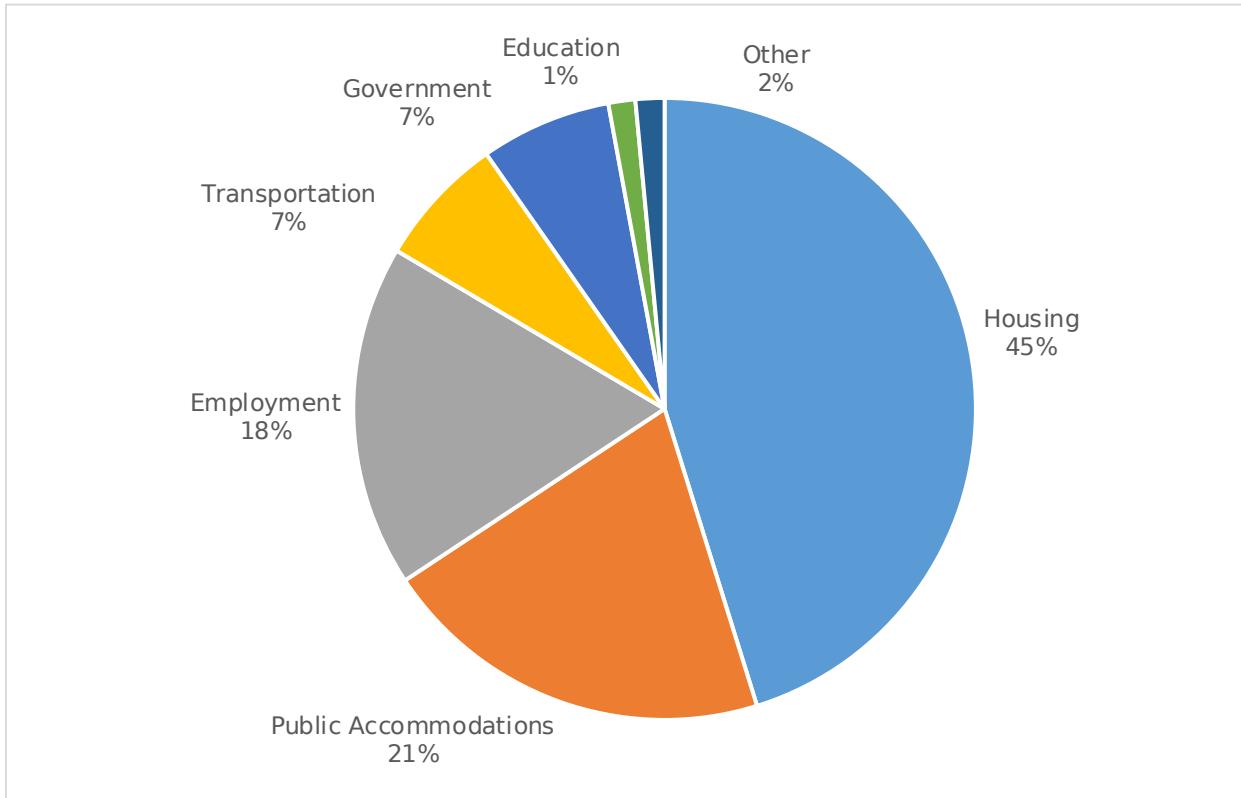
During the year, the Commission opened seven new investigations. Five 2023 cases and three 2024 cases were closed following investigation. Two of those cases culminated in the largest settlements in BMCHRC history.

Among complaints citing a protected class, most centered on disability (56%), followed by race (30%). Religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and sex appeared in three or fewer complaints each. Disability and race were also the most common protected classes referred to in complaints in 2023.



The largest portion of complaints and inquiries citing a protected class referred to discrimination in housing (45%), followed by public accommodations (20%), and employment (18%). Five complaints involved transportation, specifically Bloomington Transit, while another five referred to local or federal government,

including the Bloomington Police Department and the Monroe County Courts. While we are unable to investigate such complaints, we guided complainants to appropriate resources and collaborated with Bloomington Transit to address concerns.



As in 2023, the majority (77.9%) of complaints and inquiries likely fell within our geographical jurisdiction of the City of Bloomington and unincorporated areas of Monroe County. Six complaints came from other counties, five came from Ellettsville, and one referred to Indiana University. Information about each of these inquiries, including additional context, is available in **2024 Inquiries** (page 13).

Seven inquiries received by the BMCHRC in 2024 became formal investigations and were assigned an investigating commissioner. These were cases that seemed to have a reasonable likelihood of possible discrimination and which were brought to the commission by complainants who were interested in presenting their story and going through the process.

Three investigations alleged discrimination on the basis of race (Black), two on the basis of disability (accommodation for a physical disability, accommodation for a mental health disability), one on the basis of sex (a man), and one on the basis of national origin (a Latin American country). Four investigations alleged discrimination in housing, two in employment, and one in public accommodations. Six investigations were within Bloomington city limits, while one was in Monroe County.

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More information about each investigation is available in **2024 Investigations** (page 11).

In 2024, the BMCHRC also worked to engage with the Bloomington and Monroe County community on issues of human rights and anti-discrimination. The Commission worked with the local transgender community to help pass the Bloomington City Council's Safe Haven for Gender-Affirming Care Resolution in June, appeared at PrideFest in September, and supported the Transgender Day of Remembrance event in November. The Commission also worked to implement Bloomington's closed captioning resolution, which requires local businesses to include closed captioning on their televisions for accessibility beginning on January 1, 2025. More information about these efforts is found in **Community Engagement** (page 25).

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Expense</b>
Consulting		\$125
Human Rights Awards		\$175
Art/Essay Contest Prizes and Reception		\$791
Indiana Consortium of State and Local Human Rights Organizations Annual Dues		\$100
Commissioner Name Badges		\$154
PrideFest Tabling Fee		\$175
Promotional Decals		\$100
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$1,620</b>
The total expenses of \$1,620 were covered by the General Fund (Community and Family Resources).	<b>\$1,620</b>	
Bloomington United Donation	\$2,502	
<b>Final Balance</b>	<b>\$2,502</b>	

### 2024 Donors

**Bloomington United** donated their remaining account balance to the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission to be put to use in the community. We appreciate their generous contribution, which will support our mission and efforts in promoting diversity and combating hate and discrimination.

## 2024 INVESTIGATIONS

In 2024, five investigations opened in 2023 were brought to a close.

**BMCHRC Docket #0703:** A Black man alleged that his employment had been terminated unfairly by his employer due to racial discrimination. The employer responded with evidence showing that the man had acted in a hostile manner toward other employees during an altercation, representing a violation of the company's policies. Complaint filed in October 2023; complaint withdrawn automatically in February 2024 after complainant stopped communication. Investigated by Commissioner Jackson.

**BMCHRC Docket #0704:** A Black woman moved into an apartment using a housing voucher and found several maintenance problems within the unit. After less than a month, her lease was terminated, which she alleged was due to racial discrimination. The property manager for the unit demonstrated that they had addressed the maintenance issues and that they had terminated her lease due to the woman's threatening behavior toward them, which had prompted them to file a restraining order. Complaint filed in October 2023; no probable cause found in February 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Coover.

**BMCHRC Docket #0705:** A woman with a disability and mental health condition alleged employment discrimination in the way her company addressed her request for an accommodation. Complaint filed in December 2023; complainant withdrew following a substantial monetary settlement in July 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Radewan.

**BMCHRC Docket #0706:** A woman was unable to prepare for mandatory renovations within her apartment due to her disability. The renovations were not completed and the woman's lease was not renewed. She alleges that her landlord discriminated against her because of her disability. Complaint filed in December 2023; complainant withdrew in March 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Bangert prior to January 2024; taken over by Commissioner Gray.

**BMCHRC Docket #0707:** A man living in the United States on a visa entered a bar with his passport available as age verification. The visa stamped within the passport had expired, but he possessed an additional document extending the length of his stay. The bouncer questioned the validity of the documents and warned that he would not, in future, accept expired documentation, although the passport and visa accurately showed that the man was over the age of 21. Complaint filed in December 2023; complainant withdrew following the bar's agreement to clarify its policy in January 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Williams.

In 2024, seven new investigations were opened, of which four remain in progress.

**BMCHRC Docket #0708:** A man was barred from entering a local business after he interacted with several younger women cashiers. He alleged that the ban was based on sex discrimination and that his conversations with the cashiers would

have been permissible from a woman customer. The business showed that he had caused significant discomfort and that their policy was to ban any customer, regardless of sex, who behaved inappropriately. Complaint filed in February 2024; no probable cause found in April 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Jackson.

**BMCHRC Docket #0709:** A couple, one of whom had a disability, alleged discrimination in housing when their landlord charged what they felt was an extortionate fee for an accessibility modification. The landlord agreed to accept the amount they had already paid and to waive the remainder of the cost. Complaint filed in March 2024; complainants withdrew in June 2024. Investigated by Commissioner Williams.

**BMCHRC Docket #0710:** A Black man in a management position alleged racial discrimination when he was suddenly terminated, showing a history of a hostile work environment and his actions being closely scrutinized by other management despite his position of authority within the company. Complaint filed in April 2024; complainant withdrew in August 2024 following the award of a significant monetary settlement. Investigated by Commissioner Coover.

**BMCHRC Docket #0711:** A Spanish-speaking couple from Latin America moved into a rental property and alleged that they were not given a lease to review and sign and that the property owner harassed them by strictly enforcing rules they had not been made aware of. The property owner denied the allegations but was unable to produce a signed lease or other evidence. Complaint filed in October 2024; investigation ongoing.

**BMCHRC Docket #0712:** A Black man alleged racial discrimination in employment when he lost his job based on a prior criminal conviction, arguing that a non-Black employee with a similar conviction had not lost their employment. Complaint filed in October 2024; investigation ongoing.

**BMCHRC Docket #0713:** A Black man alleged that his property manager enforced certain rules more stringently with him than with white neighbors and that he was excluded from routine maintenance. Complaint filed in November 2024; investigation ongoing.

**BMCHRC Docket #0714:** A student with a mental health disability requested to break her year-long lease as a disability accommodation when she was forced to withdraw from classes and leave Bloomington to seek treatment. Her mother filed a complaint of discrimination when the landlord did not grant the accommodation request. Complaint filed in December 2024; investigation ongoing.

## 2024 INQUIRIES

In 2024, the BMCHRC received 108 inquiries which did not become formal cases and which were not filed as hate incident reports, nearly double the 57 miscellaneous inquiries received by the BMCHRC in 2023. This significant increase cannot be attributed to any one factor and may also be influenced by a change in record-keeping. These inquiries are categorized and summarized below.

**Disability Accessibility and Accommodations:** BMCHRC staff provide information and advice on questions of disability discrimination, including disability accessibility and accommodations.

- Another office in the city referred someone who needed a transportation accommodation to a commission meeting. We referred them to BT Access.
- A caller representing an organization requested information about local organizations that serve people with disabilities. Provided caller with resources.
- An apartment complex employee requested information about avoiding discrimination allegations when not renewing the lease of a tenant who had a disability. The proposed nonrenewal was based on legitimate reasons not related to the disability.
- A caller requested information and advice about providing ASL interpreters and captioning at an upcoming event. Assisted her in finding resources; she later reported that the event successfully provided ASL interpretation.
- An individual reported out-of-order elevators in an apartment complex where tenants on upper floors use wheelchairs. There were other issues associated with the complex and HAND addressed the complaint.
- An anonymous caller reported that signs within the Indiana Memorial Union were too small to be read by a person with low vision. We referred them to the IU Office of Institutional Equity.
- A student with a disability had been promised an accessible first-floor apartment but had been moved to a second-floor unit when another resident with a disability was given the first-floor unit. Suggested she provide medical documentation of her disability to the property manager and agreed to serve as a resource in conversations with the property manager if necessary.
- A man in a wheelchair had questions about the accessibility of a new housing complex. Directed him to the property manager.
- A Bloomington park reported multiple complaints about a regular visitor walking his dog off-leash despite park signage and local leash laws. The visitor stated that the dog was a service dog and thus the rules were not applicable. Reviewed relevant ADA information and spoke to experts. Service animals are generally expected to be on a leash unless the person's disability does not allow them to use a leash or the animal must be off-leash for a certain amount of time to perform a task. However, the dog must remain in the person's control via other means at all times. If the individual is able to

use a leash and the dog's current task does not require being off-leash, leash laws can generally be enforced.

- A man represented by Mobile Integrated Health Unit was experiencing accessibility barriers in his apartment. Working with MIHU to find resources to assist him.
- A wheelchair user reported that a private dumpster was blocking a curb ramp. Called the company to have it moved.
- A woman was appalled by an inaccessible restroom in a local restaurant when she ate there with a friend who has a disability. She questioned whether it was legal. Explained that the ADA has no enforcement mechanisms beyond private lawsuits. She decided to tell her friends not to visit the restaurant because of the lack of accessibility.

**Emotional Support Animals:** In 2024, the BMCHRC received an increasing number of inquiries about emotional support animals. In response, we created an informational brochure about the rights of those who have service animals or emotional support animals under fair housing laws.

- A woman asked about moving into an apartment with an emotional support animal. Provided her with information.
- A tenant encountered barriers in requesting a pet fee waived for an emotional support animal. Assisted him in requesting the reasonable accommodation.
- An individual inquired whether an emotional support animal (ESA) could be denied if it had not been spayed/neutered. ESAs have to be in compliance with local laws, such as being up to date with vaccinations, but we found no information to suggest that a landlord could require an ESA to be spayed or neutered.
- A woman reported that her landlord would not accept her emotional support animal (ESA) application as she had not submitted it before moving in. ESAs may be requested at any time as a reasonable accommodation. Assisted in mediating the situation and found that she had not submitted all necessary paperwork, at which point her ESA application would be accepted.

**Parking and Parking Accommodations:** In 2024, the BMCHRC received multiple inquiries about both public parking for those with disabilities and parking accommodations for tenants. BMCHRC staff continue to work with City offices and other organizations on parking issues.

- A woman reported that her company had replaced reserved, non-accessible spaces with accessible ones, but did not believe the new spaces were ADA compliant. Suggested she begin with an internal complaint at her company.
- A caller reported that a large employee parking lot at her place of work did not have a safe path of travel for people with mobility issues. Suggested speaking to her employer first before considering filing a complaint.

- A woman with mobility challenges requested a parking accommodation from her landlord but had not received it. Assisted to resolve a miscommunication so that she could receive her accommodation. She was to let us know if further discussion with the landlord didn't resolve the issue.
- A man reported requesting a parking accommodation and his landlord being unresponsive. Contacted the landlord, who was willing to discuss the issue. Complainant was to let us know if more assistance was needed.
- An individual requested an accessible parking space closer to her apartment complex, but did not return calls or voicemails.
- A woman using a wheelchair alleged that her landlord had refused a parking accommodation. Contacted the apartment complex, who said that she had not requested one and offered for her to fill out an accommodation form.
- A woman reported that her apartment complex was selling a parking permit to an accessible spot to a resident without a disability tag. According to the ADA, accessible parking spaces are reserved exclusively for individuals with disabilities, even in a permit-only lot when no one currently needs the space. We informed the apartment complex of this.
- A senior in a seniors-only apartment complex reported that management is redoing the parking lot with little notice, leaving residents with no nearby parking options for several days. Let her know that, while inconvenient for seniors and those with disabilities, this is not a discrimination or ADA issue.

**Transportation Accessibility:** In 2024, the BMCHRC received several inquiries and complaints regarding Bloomington Transit. BMCHRC staff worked closely with Bloomington Transit and with the Council for Community Accessibility to resolve the complaints, including providing a disability awareness training for all bus drivers.

- A man who uses a cane reported that a Bloomington Transit bus driver refused to lower the bus for him because the cold weather might cause problems with the equipment. After we spoke with them, Bloomington Transit changed their policy to lower buses for anyone who needs it, regardless of the weather.
- A man with a physical disability alleged that Bloomington Transit did not lower the bus for him to enter. Passed the complaint to Bloomington Transit, who agreed to respond directly to remedy the issue. Subsequently provided him with information to file a complaint with the ICRC.
- A man who submitted an earlier complaint about a Bloomington Transit driver suggested that the same driver refused to lower the bus for another individual. Passed the complaint to Bloomington Transit and provided the man with their direct email.
- An individual reported witnessing a Bloomington Transit driver ask inappropriate questions of a rider with a service dog. Requested more information about the questions asked and passed the complaint to Bloomington Transit, which then invited representatives from the Council for Community Accessibility to speak at an annual ADA training session.

- A woman fell at a bus stop that she felt was inaccessible. Referred to Bloomington Transit.

**Other Disability-Related Inquiries and Complaints:** Disability-related inquiries made up the largest portion of those received by the BMCHRC this year. These calls represent other issues we were made aware of in this area that do not refer to accessibility complaints, emotional support animals, parking, or transportation.

- A woman reported failures of communication between her child's disability support providers. The BMCHRC is unable to help unless she files a formal complaint of discrimination. Referred her to Indiana Legal Services.
- A woman reported failures of communication between her child's disability support providers (her second report to the BMCHRC), but did not choose to file a formal complaint of discrimination.
- A caller reported their employer tried to force them to complete work that went against limited duty instructions after an injury. Set up an intake interview; the caller did not attend.
- An individual with a disability visits a bar socially but orders only non-alcoholic beverages due to her disability. She reported that she was told she was unwelcome at the bar because of her inexpensive orders. Since the bartender was unaware of her disability, we cannot pursue a discrimination complaint.
- The personal aid of a resident with a disability was towed from an apartment complex's parking lot while assisting the resident, although the aid had requested a parking sticker and been denied. Spoke to the property manager of the complex.
- A woman with a disability who requested that maintenance staff wear a mask when entering her apartment was frustrated that they never remembered to do so. Suggested that she request a reasonable accommodation from her property manager and file a complaint if they did not accommodate her.
- A man missed work after he became temporarily disabled due to a car accident and was written up. Suggested he request a reasonable accommodation with a doctor's letter for adjustments to his work or time off.
- A student at a private school with a mental health disability alleged that she had not been treated according to the accommodations agreed upon by school administration. After significant work preparing the case, the family decided not to pursue a formal complaint at this time.
- A woman who receives treatment at an addiction clinic alleged discriminatory behavior against those with addiction by the director at the clinic. She did not file a formal complaint.
- An individual was seeking resources for Parkinson's disease. Directed to Area 10 Agency on Aging.
- A woman with disabilities shared a variety of troubles, including her struggle to find affordable resources. Referred to local organizations, most of which she had spoken to previously. Shared information about the Council for

Community Accessibility (CCA) when she expressed interest in attending CCA meetings.

**Landlord/Tenant Disputes, Eviction Cases, and Poor Property Management:**

The BMCHRC does not have jurisdiction over housing code or landlord/tenant disputes. When we receive calls about poor maintenance or offensive behavior by property management, we are not able to act unless the actions appear to be motivated by discrimination against a protected class. We refer these inquiries to the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department or the Eviction Prevention Project (now a part of the Community Justice and Mediation Center).

- A woman with a disability reported abusive and invasive actions by her property manager. She did not follow up with a complaint or send evidence.
- A woman with disabilities is going through eviction proceedings and was referred to the BMCHRC, although she did not make specific allegations of discrimination. Suggested she reach back out when she knows more, as she hoped it would be resolved in court.
- A person reported potential discrimination against his neighbor, who was being evicted, but did not know her name or whether she was interested in pursuing a complaint.
- A resource provider recounted a property manager's offensive conduct toward her client, a low-income tenant. Monitored reports from the property, which received several complaints in a short time frame, and spoke with the property manager about the complaints.
- A woman alleged housing discrimination but did not state whether it was due to a protected class.
- A man reported a landlord-tenant dispute about late payments. Directed to Eviction Prevention Project.
- A resident of an apartment complex reported their neighbor was treated offensively by a property manager in a common area. Monitored reports from the property, which received several complaints in a short time frame, and spoke with the property manager.
- A resident of an apartment complex (the neighbor referred to above) reported that he was threatened by his property manager for sitting with friends in a common area. Monitored reports from the property, which received several complaints in a short time frame, and spoke with the property manager.
- An individual reported threats from their property manager for stating that their friend was a guest when the friend was accused of trespassing. Monitored reports from the property, which received several complaints in a short time frame, and spoke with the property manager.
- A man believed that the rejection of a rental application was related to an alleged retaliatory reference by his current landlord. No reported discrimination; referred to Eviction Prevention Project.
- An individual reported a neglectful landlord and difficulty keeping up with her rent. Referred to HAND, Eviction Prevention Project, and Helping Bloomington Monroe.

- A Black man felt that a landlord was overcharging and requested that City attorneys review the lease. Established after an initial conversation that this was not a discrimination complaint and suggested he contact a private attorney as we cannot provide legal advice.
- A man complained about issues in the mobile home park where he lives. Referred to the Environmental Public Health Division, a state agency that inspects mobile home parks and campgrounds, as we have no jurisdiction over mobile home parks.
- A woman called about maintenance issues in her neighbor's apartment. Referred to HAND.
- A previously unhoused woman had been offered a temporary living solution but was being removed. She felt it could be for discriminatory reasons. Referred to the Stride Center as she was in crisis and needed immediate assistance.
- An individual reported difficulty in receiving financial assistance from local organizations due to the organizations' misunderstanding of their living situation. Attempted to assist with the situation by talking to the organizations about the individual's appeals.
- A Muslim man reported harassment by his neighbors; he had reported the situation to law enforcement but did not have confidence that they would help. He did not wish to share contact information for follow-up, but intended to contact the ACLU.

**Allegations of Housing Discrimination:** The BMCHRC investigates housing discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- A man suspected discrimination from his landlord after marrying his male partner. Requested additional information but did not hear back.
- An Indigenous woman with a disability reported a conflict with the individual renting to her; however, the agreement was informal and we are unable to pursue discrimination between individuals. We suggested she contact a lawyer.
- A Black woman called regarding excessive and intentional noise and rudeness from neighbors, which she alleged her landlord was disregarding. Offered to begin the process of a formal complaint and spoke with the landlord about the situation. Caller did not pursue a complaint.
- A representative from a refugee support organization reported that a local apartment complex did not accept two refugees as tenants because they received housing support from the organization. Set up an intake interview; the individuals had found other housing and did not wish to pursue a formal complaint.
- A Muslim woman reported harassment by a neighbor and a lack of support from her landlord. Suggested she file a formal complaint; she did not opt to follow through.

- A man reported abuse and anti-Jewish slurs used by his neighbors in a recovery program. It was not clear whether the man was Jewish. Requested additional information and permission to speak to program staff; he did not follow up.
- A woman alleged racial and disability discrimination by her landlord. Scheduled an intake interview; she chose not to pursue the complaint because she was able to move to a different apartment complex.
- A woman alleged disability discrimination when her lease was not renewed. Gathering more information about the situation.

**Allegations of Employment Discrimination:** The BMCHRC investigates employment discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- An incarcerated man alleged discrimination by an online criminal record database that made it difficult for him to find employment. Expressed that the database itself was neutral and that employers have the right to base employment decisions on one's criminal record, but that he could reach out to us if he encountered discrimination based on his race or housing status.
- A Black man was fired from his job in 2023 and felt that it was a biased decision, but no longer remembered details of the incident. This happened outside the BMCHRC's 180 day statute of limitations.
- A Latina woman alleged discriminatory and hurtful treatment by senior coworkers at her place of employment. She began the process of filing a formal complaint but chose not to follow through.
- A Black woman alleged that a new supervisor at the restaurant where she worked made racially discriminatory comments, gave employees of color less preferential shifts, and fired her for an unsound reason. She was scheduled for an intake interview to make a formal complaint but chose not to follow through.

**Allegations of Public Accommodations Discrimination:** The BMCHRC investigates public accommodations discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- A white woman reported that she was upcharged at a store with non-white management. She did not respond to a follow-up for more information.
- A Black woman in hospice experienced poor treatment by hospice workers. Suggested she write a formal letter to the hospice company for answers to her questions as she was not interested in filing a complaint.

- A resource provider called on behalf of her client, a transgender woman, who alleged discrimination and mistreatment at a fast food restaurant. Encouraged the client to file a complaint, but she did not choose to do so.
- An anonymous individual reported that their party was ignored and received bad service at a local restaurant because the group was visibly LGBTQ+.
- A Native American woman alleged discriminatory treatment at a local nonprofit. She did not respond to a follow-up for more information.
- A transgender woman alleged harassment by an employee at a local gym. Assisted her in requesting a follow-up on gym policy from management, with the understanding that a formal complaint could be filed with the BMCHRC if the management's response was unfavorable.

**Complaints Regarding Local or Federal Government:** Due to conflict of interest, the BMCHRC is not able to pursue any complaints that allege discrimination in federal or local government, including the Bloomington Police Department or Monroe County Courts. However, we endeavor to direct those who call with these complaints to the correct resources.

- A man reported problems with his mail being delivered. We referred him to postal authorities.
- A woman reported complaints with a township trustee office but did not show discrimination against a protected class. We cannot investigate Monroe County, but we referred her to the Department of Justice.
- A person alleged that their civil rights were violated within the Monroe County Court system. We referred them to the Indiana Office of Judicial and Attorney Regulation.
- A nonresident man described a criminal attack on him in Bloomington followed by his arrest and unwilling placement in inpatient mental health care. He alleged discrimination by city and/or county police, which BMCHRC cannot investigate. Directed to Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- A Black woman reported an incident from many years ago in which she was mistaken for another Black woman and an arrest was incorrectly put on her record. While the incident is outside of the BMCHRC's statute of limitations, she was working with the Bloomington Police Department to expunge her record.
- A man with multiple mental health disabilities was arrested following a mental health crisis and felt that the Bloomington Police Department did not follow proper protocol. Referred him to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the internal BPD complaint form.
- A Native American woman described discriminatory treatment throughout Bloomington institutions and within local government, particularly in regard to systemic racism and structures designed to benefit white people over people of color. Met with her but were unable to find a way to develop an affidavit regarding her complaints.
- An Asian woman alleged receiving poor service at a Bloomington branch of a federal government office. Her boyfriend, who is also Asian, was not allowed to accompany her, while other customers had companions. Spoke to her and

gave some guidance but were unable to assist as federal offices fall outside of our jurisdiction.

**Out of Jurisdiction:** We were not able to pursue the following complaints as they fall outside of our geographic jurisdiction; however, we attempted to refer callers to other resources.

- A man living in a different county reported that his employer was discriminating against him because of his disability. We referred him to EEOC.
- A man in Ellettsville stated that his apartment complex alleged that his service animal had attacked someone and would not let him keep it, even though the police found no evidence of the attack. We referred him to Housing and Urban Development.
- A woman with a disability alleged discrimination from a Monroe County food pantry that fell outside our geographic jurisdiction. Suggested she speak to CFRD about other options for food assistance.
- A woman called to allege disability discrimination in employment on behalf of her daughter. The daughter lives and works in Ohio; directed her to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission.
- An individual in another county was refused the accommodation of an ASL interpreter in court. Out of our jurisdiction; referred to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and Indiana Disability Justice Leadership.
- A woman with a disability has serious maintenance issues in her apartment that are endangering her health. She is in Ellettsville and out of jurisdiction. Directed to Town of Ellettsville government and encouraged her to continue working with her doctor to request accommodations of her landlord.
- A man with hearing loss who worked in customer service was told to remove his hearing aids because his manager believed they were headphones he was using to listen to music. The individual lived in an adjoining county and was out of jurisdiction.
- A Black woman from Michigan described being treated with suspicion and questioned by the police in a chain store where she was the only Black shopper. Directed her to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.
- A woman alleged racial discrimination in employment. Her former employer is located out of our jurisdiction in Ellettsville; assisted her in developing the affidavit for an EEOC complaint.
- A woman living in Ellettsville reported restrictive rules and invasive behavior by her property manager. Out of service area; referred to Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- A man called regarding his eviction; he lives outside of Monroe County. Directed to Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- An individual expressed that an eviction notice was discriminatory, but did not give additional details. They lived in an adjoining county and were out of jurisdiction.

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- An individual in Ellettsville reported harassment by her neighbors and inappropriate behavior by her landlord. Referred her to Indiana Civil Rights Commission and Fair Housing of South Central Indiana.

**Unclear Complaints:** The following complaints did not provide enough information to pursue or were written in an unclear or incoherent way.

- A brief statement alleged that a hospital had been negligent. No further information was provided and complainant did not respond to follow-up.
- A man described being mentally and physically abused and mistreated. He did not follow up with more information about his experiences.
- An individual submitted a complaint against a local organization without information about the incident or the type of discrimination alleged. Requested further information.

**Miscellaneous Requests for Information:** These inquiries do not fall under prior categories and were often requests for a specific piece of information.

- A caller requested a copy of a consent agreement from her client's Bloomington Human Rights Commission case from several years ago. Provided the documentation.
- A representative of the human rights commission in Dallas, Texas, requested information about the BMCHRC. Met with them via videoconferencing to speak about our work.
- A caller requested a living wage certificate, which we provided.
- A representative from a housing organization requested information about housing discrimination to avoid potential bias in selecting applicants. Provided relevant information and explanations.
- An out-of-state caller requested information about local lawyers regarding a crime that had occurred in Bloomington. Referenced Indiana Legal Services; encouraged her to submit a police report. As a local governmental entity, we are unable to provide recommendations for specific professionals.
- An individual wanted to know if she was covered under the living wage ordinance. Shared the information and FAQs at [bloomington.in.gov/business/living-wage](http://bloomington.in.gov/business/living-wage).
- A woman reported a HIPAA violation and wished to pursue further steps such as a lawsuit. We suggested she contact a lawyer or Indiana Legal Services.
- A woman described her struggle to work with her bank on behalf of her incarcerated husband. Helped clarify her next steps with the bank.
- An individual sent a mass publication to many human rights commissions describing human rights abuses outside of the United States.

## HATE INCIDENT REPORT

### **WARNING: THIS REPORT INCLUDES OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE, INCLUDING RACIAL SLURS, TO PROVIDE AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF THESE INCIDENTS.**

In August, 1990, the Bloomington Common Council unanimously approved an amendment to the Bloomington Human Rights Ordinance which gave the Bloomington Human Rights Commission the explicit authority to collect data and issue reports on hate incidents within our community. We accept reports from police departments, individuals, groups and the media. We also accept anonymous reports. Our goal is not to investigate these incidents, as we do not have the authority to conduct that type of investigation. Rather, our goals are to serve as a referral resource and sounding board for victims, to work with community groups to coordinate responses to hate incidents when appropriate, and to make our community more aware of the prevalence of hate incidents by updating this document on-line as we receive new reports.

- In July 2024, an individual discovered a “voodoo doll” with racist and threatening imagery left outside their door.
- In August 2024, a Black woman reported that an employee at a local business yelled and used racial slurs when interacting with her young daughter, who is Black and has autism.
- In September 2024, a Black man left his shift at a local grocery store to find that someone had written “NIGGER” on the hood of his truck in permanent marker.
- In September 2024, a piece of wood with a swastika drawn on it, alongside two playing cards that are symbols tied to white supremacy groups, was found outside Congregation Beth Shalom.
- In November 2024, a Black Indiana University professor was walking through campus when an unidentified person in a vehicle made repeated chimpanzee noises toward them.
-

## STRATEGIC GOALS AND INITIATIVES

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission's mission is to enforce our community's anti-discrimination ordinance, to educate the community about civil rights laws, and to advocate for changes in policy to promote equal rights and opportunities.

In 2025, the BMCHRC's key priority is to continue our work to further that mission, regardless of any change in political climate. We will continue to investigate any allegations of discrimination within our jurisdiction brought before us. We will continue to be visible at informational events and educate the community through publications and statements. Lastly, we will continue to propose and advocate for relevant policy changes that support our mission.

At the November and December 2024 meetings, commissioners articulated a need to support vulnerable groups in Bloomington and Monroe County, particularly communities of color, the LGBTQ+ community, the immigrant community, and the Muslim and Jewish communities. Commissioners also began working on new initiatives to support transgender people, who are being increasingly affected by new and discriminatory state laws. As we continue our work in 2025, we aim to look for new opportunities to support and protect those most at risk of discrimination.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Closed Captioning Ordinance

In December 2023, the Bloomington City Council passed Ordinance 23-31, requiring local businesses to enable closed captions on public televisions during business hours. After being approached by the local Deaf community, the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission (BMCHRC) had proposed the resolution in collaboration with the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA). Partners on the project include the Indiana Association for the Deaf, the AARP, and the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. Closed captions help reduce communication barriers in places of public accommodation for people with hearing loss and other disabilities, allowing more people to access information equally. After January 1, 2025, local businesses are required to provide captions on all public televisions showing unique programming. An individual may allege a violation by filing a complaint with the BMCHRC, which has the authority to investigate and resolve complaints of disability discrimination.

For more information, visit [bloomington.in.gov/boards/community-accessibility/captioning](http://bloomington.in.gov/boards/community-accessibility/captioning).

### 2024 Human Rights Award

In 1997, the Bloomington Human Rights Commission began recognizing individuals and groups who have contributed to improving human rights in our community. In 2024, the BMCHRC was honored to recognize Byron Bangert and Building a Thriving Compassionate Community (BTCC). They received their individual and organization awards on May 15, 2024, during the City Council meeting.

Byron Bangert, a retired academic, ethics consultant, and ordained minister, served on the Human Rights Commission for twenty-seven years and has been a deeply involved and dedicated volunteer for many local organizations for decades.

BTCC is a network of individuals dedicated to identifying and addressing social problems in Monroe County. They aim to promote an equitable society by offering trainings and resources centered on upholding human rights and helping those in need.

Image to right, from left to right: BMCHRC Commissioner Susan Gray; BMCHRC Commissioner Stephen Coover; Byron Bangert; representatives of BTCC Jess Tang, Hannah Lencheck, and Li Meuser; BTCC Chair Ryne Shadday.



## Student Art and Essay Contest



in Council Chambers.

Each year, the BMCHRC holds an art and essay contest for local students in grades K-6. In 2024, students were asked to consider the theme "What is the most important human right to you and why?" On May 13, 2024, the winners were honored in a ceremony at City Hall with Mayor Thomson. She praised them for their courage in standing up for their beliefs and asked them to encourage their friends to do the same. In the image to the left, winners pose with Mayor Thomson

In the art category, first place was awarded to Henry Fehrman, a second grader at Templeton Elementary. Second place went to Harper Burroughs, a sixth grader at Marlin Elementary, while third place was given to William Alhassainat, a first grader at Rogers Elementary. Commissioners Jackson and Coover praised the students' artistic visions, use of vibrant colors, and expressions of equality and diversity.

In the essay category, first place went to Piper Burroughs, a sixth grader at Marlin Elementary. Second place was awarded to Telly Lotven, a sixth grader at University Elementary who submitted a poem. Third place was given to Phoenix Gordon, a sixth grader at Templeton Elementary. Commissioners Williams and Crisovan congratulated the winners on their creativity and use of research skills.

## Safe Haven for Gender-Affirming Healthcare Resolution Passed By Bloomington City Council

On June 12, 2024, the Bloomington City Council passed a resolution protecting the right to gender-affirming care in our community. The BMCHRC was honored to recommend this resolution to the council and was thrilled to see it pass unanimously, 8-0. In the image to the right, residents line up for public comment in City Council Chambers. London Montgomery, one of those who first brought the idea of the resolution to the BMCHRC, stands at the microphone.



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Gender-affirming care is evidence-based, necessary, and lifesaving, and healthcare is a human right. During the public comment period, members of the transgender and LGBTQ+ communities, parents of trans children, and other allies expressed an outpouring of support for the resolution and shared personal experiences about the importance of maintaining access to gender-affirming healthcare.

The BMCHRC's ordinance prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education, in Bloomington and unincorporated areas of Monroe County.

### **Proclamation and Celebration at Bloomington PrideFest**



The BMCHRC was honored to table at Bloomington PrideFest on September 14, 2024, and to connect with the community with our message that LGBTQ+ rights are human rights.

Early in the afternoon, BMCHRC Chair Ryne Shadday presented the City's proclamation in support of transgender rights from the main stage and spoke briefly about the Safe Haven for Gender-Affirming Healthcare resolution.

He was followed by community activists London Montgomery and Lilliana Young (appointed a BMCHRC commissioner in October 2024), who gave powerful remarks about the importance of gender-affirming healthcare and resisting hostile, transphobic forces in politics.

Throughout the afternoon and evening, BMCHRC commissioners and staff met community members and visitors at the Commission's table, making connections and sharing information about our work, Bloomington's history of support for LGBTQ+ civil rights, and the Safe Haven resolution. Above, Commissioners Shadday, Autumn Crisovan, and Susan Gray pose with the "Did you know that Bloomington is a Safe Haven for Gender-Affirming Healthcare?" sign.

### **New Informational Brochures**

In 2024, the BMCHRC created three new brochures to respond to frequent questions and provide at tabling events. These [brochures](#) are available in PDF format on Google Drive or in physical format by request.

"What is Discrimination?" (available in both English and Spanish) defines discrimination, explains the BMCHRC's process, and provides contact



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information for additional resources for complaints that are outside of our jurisdiction.

“Understanding Bloomington’s Closed Captioning Ordinance” lays out the responsibilities of the new closed captioning ordinance for Bloomington business owners.

“Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals in Bloomington” explains the different rights of people with assistance animals, especially in fair housing and in public accommodations.

## Bloomington Receives Perfect Score on Municipal Equality Index

For the tenth consecutive year, Bloomington has received a score of 100/100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Municipal Equality Index (MEI). The MEI examines 506 American cities to rate how inclusive their laws, policies, and services are for the LGBTQ+ residents. Criteria include the presence of non-discrimination laws, the availability of municipal services to LGBTQ+ individuals, and the public stance of city leadership on LGBTQ+ equality.



Bloomington has been consistently recognized over the past decade for its commitment to LGBTQ+ equality, earning 100/100 again in 2024. It remains the only city in Indiana to achieve a perfect score in 2024, despite state policies that limit inclusivity.

Thank you to former BMCHRC Director Barbara McKinney for her work helping ensure Bloomington's perfect MEI score from 2015-2022!

## CONTACT US

Commission meetings are held on the third Mondays of the month and are open to the public. Please join us! Meetings take place in the Hooker Room (City Hall, 401 N. Morton St.) at 5:00 p.m. In 2025, the January and February meetings have been rescheduled due to federal holidays. Virtual attendance via Zoom is available if requested in advance ([human.rights@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:human.rights@bloomington.in.gov)).

In 2025, the BMCHRC is scheduled to meet on:

**Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 5:30 p.m., in the Allison Room (City Hall).**  
**Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 5:30 p.m., in the Allison Room (City Hall).**  
Monday, March 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, April 21, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, May 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, June 16, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, July 21, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, August 18, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, September 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, October 20, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, November 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).  
Monday, December 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).

For more information and to keep up with the BMCHRC, visit or contact us at:

**Website:** [bloomington.in.gov/bhrc](http://bloomington.in.gov/bhrc)  
**Facebook:** [facebook.com/BloomingtonHumanRights](https://facebook.com/BloomingtonHumanRights)  
**Newsletter Signup:** [lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/PB20Ve8](http://lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/PB20Ve8)  
**Email:** [human.rights@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:human.rights@bloomington.in.gov)  
**Phone:** 812-349-3478

To file an initial intake for a complaint or a hate incident report, visit:

**Initial Intake Form:** [bton.in/HRCForm](http://bton.in/HRCForm)  
**Hate Incident Report:** [tinyurl.com/BMCHRC-HateIncident](http://tinyurl.com/BMCHRC-HateIncident)