

# **Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission**

## **Director's Quarterly Report**

**January to March 2024**

### **I. Discrimination Complaints**

#### **A. Pending from previous quarters**

1. Commissioner Bangert's disability discrimination case
  - a. A woman filed a complaint of discrimination in housing on the basis of disability in December 2023.
  - b. Commissioner Gray took over the case in January 2024.
  - c. Complaint withdrawn in March 2024.
2. Commissioner Coover's racial discrimination case
  - a. A woman filed a complaint of discrimination in housing on the basis of race in November 2023.
  - b. No probable cause found in February 2024.
3. Commissioner Radewan's disability discrimination case
  - a. A woman filed a complaint of discrimination in employment on the basis of disability in December 2023.
  - b. Jointly filed with the EEOC.
  - c. Investigation in progress.
4. Commissioner Jackson's racial discrimination case
  - a. A man filed a complaint of discrimination in employment on the basis of race in October 2023.
  - b. Jointly filed with the EEOC.
  - c. Complaint withdrawn based on failure of complainant to respond in February 2024.
5. Commissioner Williams's national origin case
  - a. A man filed a complaint of discrimination in public accommodations based on national origin in December 2023.
  - b. Complaint withdrawn in January 2024 after respondent clarified policy.

#### **B. New cases**

1. Commissioner Jackson's sex discrimination case
  - a. A man filed a complaint of discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sex in February 2024.
  - b. Investigation in progress.
2. Commissioner Williams' disability discrimination case.
  - a. A woman filed a complaint of discrimination in housing on the basis of disability in March 2024.
  - b. Investigation in progress.

C. Complaints filed with other jurisdictions

1. None.

**II. Miscellaneous Inquiries**

- A. 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.
- B. Another office in the city referred someone who needed a transportation accommodation to a commission meeting. We referred them to BT Access.
- C. A man reported problems with his mail being delivered. We referred him to postal authorities.
- D. 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.
- E. A woman was unhappy 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.
- F. A woman reported a HIPAA violation and wished to pursue further steps such as a lawsuit. We referred her to a lawyer or Indiana Legal Services.
- G. A caller representing an organization requested information about local organizations that serve people with disabilities. Provided caller with resources.
- H. A woman asked about moving into an apartment with an emotional support animal. Provided her with information.
- I. A man suspected discrimination from his landlord after marrying his male partner.
- J. A caller requested a copy of a consent agreement from her client's Bloomington Human Rights Commission case from several years ago.
- K. 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.
- L. 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.
- M. A caller requested information and advice about providing ASL interpreters and captioning at an upcoming event.
- N. 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.

- O. 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.
- P. A man living in a different county reported that his employer was discriminating against him because of his disability. We referred him to EEOC.
- Q. An individual reported out-of-order elevators in an apartment complex where tenants on upper floors use wheelchairs.
- R. 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.
- S. A representative of the human rights commission in Dallas, Texas, requested information about the BMCHRC.
- T. 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.
- U. 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.
- V. 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.
- W. A caller requested a living wage certificate, which we provided.

### **III. Publicity**

- A. Emailed monthly newsletter, *Rights Stuff*, to 100+ individuals and organizations, and placed physical copies in City Hall and the Monroe County Public Library (downtown branch).
- B. Updated BMCHRC Facebook Page
- C. Contacted local schools and youth programs regarding the Art/Essay Contest
- D. Developed a "What is Discrimination?" brochure to be handed out at tabling events.
- E. Shermis was interviewed by the *Herald Times* on the closed captioning ordinance on 01/08/24.
- F. Shermis was interviewed on his duties as the BMCHRC Director by Steve Volan for The 812 Show on 01/23/24.
- G. Shermis was interviewed on the closed captioning ordinance by Abe Shapiro for WFHB's Disabulletin on 03/19/24.

#### IV. Networking/Education

- A. The BMCHRC worked with local transgender right activists London Montgomery and Lilliana Young to propose a resolution supporting gender-affirming health care in Bloomington to City Council.
- B. Shermis worked with representatives of Indiana Association for the Deaf, Indiana AARP, and the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce on implementation of the closed captioning ordinance.
- C. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- D. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Accessibility Committee.
- E. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Transportation and Mobility Committee.
- F. Shermis attended bi-weekly meetings of the City's Digital Accessibility Workgroup.
- G. Shermis and Coover attended monthly meetings for the Nonprofit Alliance's Community Outreach Breakfast.
- H. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the Thriving Connections Economic Stability Advisory Group.
- I. Shermis attended the board meeting for MALL (Mobility Aids Lending Library) on 01/14/24.
- J. Radewan attended the Monroe County Health Department SUMH-SOFR meeting on 01/17/24.
- K. Shermis attended the Regional Transit Summit on 01/24/24.
- L. Radewan attended the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana's Housing Impact webinar discussing fair housing laws on 01/24/24.
- M. Shermis presented at the Monroe County Apartment Association on 02/08/24.
- N. Shermis and Vosmeier met with Anne-Therese Ryan, new director of the Terre Haute Human Relations Commission, on 02/09/24 to discuss her appointment and what the job should entail.
- O. Shermis and Vosmeier facilitated a Meet the Media Nonprofit Alliance networking event on 02/14/24.
- P. Shermis and Williams tabled for the BMCHRC at the Black Market on 02/17/24.
- Q. Shermis met with an Indiana University business student researching sustainable and equitable transportation on 02/20/24.
- R. Vosmeier attended the Black History Month Gala on 02/24/24.
- S. Radewan participated in the Community Advisory on Public Safety panel and discussion of the film *Reimagining Safety* on 02/24/24 and 02/25/24.
- T. Shermis met with and advised a representative from the Dallas, Texas, Human Rights Commission on 03/06/24.
- U. Shermis and Vosmeier met with Elisabeth Solchik, Fundraising Director of Spencer Pride, to discuss event accessibility on 03/07/24.

- V. Radewan participated in the Convening for Inclusive Advantage workshop on building a comprehensive, county-wide DEI strategy on 03/19/24.
- W. Shermis, Coover, and Vosmeier attended the Middle Way House Luncheon on 03/26/24.
- X. Shermis and Vosmeier attended the Meet the Mayor event at Stone Belt with the Council for Community Accessibility on 03/26/24.
- Y. Shermis, Coover, and Vosmeier attended the Women's History Month Luncheon on 03/28/24. Coover distributed "What Is Discrimination?" brochures.
- Z. Radewan tabled at the UU Church Poverty Abolitionist event, providing information on BMCHRC and handing out both general and "What Is Discrimination?" brochures.
- AA. Shermis attended trainings on Accessible PowerPoints (01/18/24), Building Blocks to Effectively Respond to Court Disability Related Challenges and Difficult Situations (02/19/24), Employee Work Areas and Break Rooms (02/06/24), FMLA: What You Need to Know (03/19/24), and What's New With WCAG 2.0 (03/21/24).
- BB. Williams attended Safe Streets for All Steering Committee meetings.
- CC. Radewan attended Community Advisory on Public Safety committee meetings.
- DD. Coover tabled at the Ivy Tech job fair and gave away "What is Discrimination?" brochures.

**V. ADA and Accessibility**

- A. Shermis coordinated with representatives of Bloomington Transit on questions of accessibility.
- B. Shermis met with Monroe County History Center staff to discuss accessible parking options near their building.