

Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission

Director's Quarterly Report

April to June 2024

I. Discrimination Complaints

- A. Pending from previous quarters
 - 1. 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. No probable cause found in May 2024.
 - d. Appeal filed with the BMCHRC in June 2024.
 - e. Settlement potentially reached with respondent before appeal hearing could take place. Settlement negotiations and withdrawal in progress.
 - 2. 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. No probable cause found in April 2024.
 - 3. Commissioner Williams' disability discrimination case.
 - a. A woman filed a complaint of discrimination in housing on the basis of disability in March 2024.
 - b. Complainant withdrew after reaching agreement with landlord in June 2024.
- B. New cases
 - 1. Commissioner Coover's racial discrimination case
 - a. A man filed a complaint of discrimination in employment on the basis of race in April 2024.
 - b. Jointly filed with the EEOC.
 - c. Investigation in progress.
- C. Complaints filed with other jurisdictions
 - 1. None.

II. Miscellaneous Inquiries

- A. 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.
- B. 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.

- C. A resource provider recounted a property manager's offensive conduct toward her client, a low-income tenant. Continuing to monitor reports from the property, which has been the subject of multiple recent complaints.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. A man called regarding his eviction; he lives outside of Monroe County. Directed to Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- G. 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.
- H. A woman alleged housing discrimination but did not state whether it was due to a protected class.
- I. A man in a wheelchair had questions about the accessibility of a new housing complex. Directed him to the property manager.
- J. 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.
- K. 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.
- L. 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.
- M. 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.
- N. A man reported a landlord-tenant dispute about late payments. Directed to Eviction Prevention Project.
- O. 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.

- P. 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.
- Q. 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.
- R. A white woman reported that she was up charged at a store with non-white management. Did not respond to a follow-up.
- S. A resource provider called on behalf of her client, a transgender woman, who alleged discrimination and mistreatment at a fast food restaurant. Encouraged her to file a complaint.
- T. A man who submitted an earlier complaint about a Bloomington Transit driver suggested there is a pattern of selective discrimination. The driver, the same driver from the previous complaint, refused to lower the bus, for a woman, despite her request, age, and being short. This driver, initially, wouldn't lower the bus for him even though he knew the man was disabled. Then the bus driver let another woman who requested it lowered and he did. Because the Bloomington Transit is with the City, let him know that his complaint was passed to Bloomington Transit and provided him with the customer service email.
- U. A woman described her struggle to work with her bank on behalf of her incarcerated husband. Helped clarify her next steps with the bank.
- V. 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.
- W. 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.
- X. A brief statement alleged that a hospital had been negligent. No further information was provided and complainant did not respond to follow-up.

- Y. A resident of an apartment complex reported their neighbor was discriminated against in a common area. Monitoring the apartment complex, which has been the subject of multiple recent complaints.
- Z. A resident of an apartment complex (the neighbor referred to in II.Y) reported the property manager threatening him for sitting with friends in a common area. Requested additional information about potential discrimination. Monitoring the apartment complex, which has been the subject of multiple recent complaints.
- AA. A tenant encountered barriers in requesting a pet fee waived for an emotional support animal. In the process of gathering more information.
- BB. 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. Seeking more information and monitoring the apartment complex, which has been the subject of multiple recent complaints.
- CC. An individual reported threats from their property manager for stating that their friend was a guest when the friend was accused of trespassing. Seeking more information and monitoring the apartment complex, which has been the subject of multiple recent complaints.
- DD. A Muslim woman reported harassment by a neighbor and a lack of support from her landlord. Suggested she file a formal complaint.
- EE. 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. Bloomington Transit has invited representatives from the Council for Community Accessibility to speak at the annual ADA training session.

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. Shadday was interviewed on WFHB Activate! on April 29, 2024.
- D. "Generations of Lost Wealth: *Unwelcomed* Exhibit in Bloomington Spotlights Housing Discrimination that Blocks Homeownership" (May 10, 2024) by Marilyn Odendahl for the *Indiana Citizen* described the *Unwelcomed* exhibit and quoted Shermis.
- E. "Byron Bangert recognized by Bloomington Human Rights Commission" (June 2, 2024) by Norm Crampton for the *Herald-Times* interviewed former commissioner Bangert and described his nomination for the BMCHRC's annual Human Rights Award.

- F. "Bloomington council passes resolution protecting gender-affirming care rights" (June 12, 2024) by Lucas González for WTIU/WFIU News described the Safe Haven resolution and mentioned the BMCHRC's involvement.
- G. "Bloomington City Council passes resolution in support of transgender community, gender-affirming health care" (June 13, 2024) by Emily Longnecker for WTHR Indianapolis described the Safe Haven resolution.
- H. "City council declares Bloomington a 'safe haven' for gender-affirming healthcare" (June 13, 2024) by Dave Askins for the B Square Bulletin described the Safe Haven resolution and mentioned the BMCHRC's involvement and Shadday's statement.
- I. "Council votes to make Bloomington 'safe haven' for gender-affirming care" (June 14, 2024) by Jill Bond for the *Herald-Times* described the Safe Haven resolution and described the BMCHRC's involvement and Shadday's statement.
- J. Shadday was interviewed on the 812 podcast on June 18, 2024.

IV. Networking/Education

- A. The BMCHRC worked with local transgender rights activists London Montgomery and Lilliana Young to propose a resolution supporting gender-affirming health care in Bloomington to City Council. The resolution was passed unanimously on June 12, 2024.
- B. The BMCHRC hosted the *Unwelcomed* fair housing exhibit in the City Hall Atrium from May 3, 2024, to May 31, 2024.
- C. The BMCHRC hosted the annual Arts/Essay Contest and held an awards ceremony on May 13, 2024.
- D. The BMCHRC recognized the annual Human Rights Award winners at the City Council meeting on May 15, 2024.
- E. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- F. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the CCA Accessibility Committee.
- G. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Transportation and Mobility Committee.
- H. Shermis attended two quarterly meetings of the Indiana Consortium of State and Local Human Rights Agencies.
- I. Shermis attended bi-weekly meetings of the City's Digital Accessibility Workgroup.
- J. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Nonprofit Alliance's Community Outreach Breakfast.
- K. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the Thriving Connections Economic Stability Advisory Group.
- L. Shermis attended the Stone Belt Community Engagement Fair on April 12, 2024.

- M. Coover handed out "What is Discrimination?" brochures at Middle Way House's SAAM walk on April 13, 2024.
- N. Shermis and Vosmeier planned and attended the Accessibility in Public Right-of-Ways Workshop for the CCA on May 1, 2024.
- O. Vosmeier tabled for the CCA at the Senior Expo on May 8, 2024, and provided "What is Discrimination?" brochures.
- P. Coover handed out "What is Discrimination?" brochures at a Morgenstern's event.
- Q. Shadday spoke at City Council to present a drafted statement decrying recent hateful public comment at City Council.
- R. Gray attended the community meeting on the proposed jail site on June 2, 2024.
- S. Shermis attended the CJAM Community Breakfast on June 4, 2024.
- T. Coover handed out "What is Discrimination?" brochures at the MCPL resource fair.
- U. Vosmeier attended the City's Juneteenth celebrations on June 15, 2024.
- V. Shermis attended trainings on The 'Act' in Action: Engaging Communities to Achieve (04/17/24), Finding One's Advocacy Community (04/24/24), Fair Housing Panel (04/25/24), Doors and Gates (05/02/24), and Title II – Accessibility for State and Local Government (06/06/2024).
- W. Vosmeier attended trainings on Title II – Accessibility for State and Local Government (06/06/2024), EEOC LGBTQ+ in the Workplace (06/11/2024), and Elevating Inclusion through Intersectionality (06/26/2024).

V. ADA and Accessibility

- A. Shermis coordinated with representatives of Bloomington Transit on questions of accessibility.
- B. Shermis worked with other ESD and Engineering departments to verify accessibility of parklets.
- C. Shermis reviewed doors, restrooms, and Parks and Recreation pool facilities.
- D. Shermis worked to finalize the 2024 ADA Transition Plan and presented about the Plan to the Bike/Pedestrian Commission (June 10, 2024) and the Traffic Commission (June 26, 2024).
- E. Vosmeier assisted the Parks & Rec Department with training on an electric wheelchair-accessible golf cart on June 11, 2024.
- F. Shermis attended the National ADA Symposium on June 10-12, 2024.