

Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission

Director's Quarterly Report

July to September 2024

I. Discrimination Complaints

- A. Pending from previous quarters
 - 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. Settlement reached in August 2024 awarding complainant with significant monetary damages.
- B. New cases
 - 1. None.
- C. Complaints filed with other jurisdictions
 - 1. None.

II. Miscellaneous Inquiries

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. A man described being mentally and physically abused and mistreated. He did not follow up with more information about his experiences.
- E. A representative from a housing organization requested information about housing discrimination to avoid potential bias in selecting applicants. Provided relevant information and explanations.
- F. An individual reported difficulty in receiving financial assistance from local organizations due to the organizations' misunderstanding of cooperative living. Currently trying to assist with the situation by talking to the organizations about the individual's appeals.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.

- I. A Black woman reported being banned from a local laundromat after an employee abused and used racial slurs toward the woman's young Black daughter with autism. She did not follow up or come in for an intake interview.
- J. An anonymous individual reported that their party was ignored and received bad service at a local restaurant because the group was visibly LGBTQ+.
- K. A man represented by Mobile Integrated Health Unit was experiencing accessibility barriers in his apartment. Working with MIHU to find resources to assist him.
- L. 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.
- M. A man reported requesting a parking accommodation and his landlord being unresponsive. Contacted the landlord. Landlord asked for him to discuss and complainant was to let us know if more assistance was needed.
- N. 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.
- O. An individual was seeking resources for Parkinson's disease. Directed to Area 10 Agency on Aging.
- P. 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.
- Q. 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.
- R. An individual requested an accessible parking space closer to her apartment complex, but did not return calls or voice mails.
- S. 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.
- T. An individual reported a neglectful landlord and difficulty keeping up with her rent. Referred to HAND, Eviction Prevention Project, and Helping Bloomington Monroe.
- U. 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.
- V. 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 let the apartment complex know this, but unless someone wants to make a formal complaint (and she didn't have a disability), we can't pursue this one.

- W. 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.
- X. An individual submitted a complaint against a local organization without information about the incident or the type of discrimination alleged. Requested further information.
- Y. 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.

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. Former Bloomington Human Rights Commissioner Doug Bauder was celebrated in “What was it like to be gay in southern Indiana in the 1990s? Ask Doug Bauder” by Brian Rosenzweig in the *Herald-Times* (September 16, 2024).

IV. Networking/Education

- A. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- B. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the CCA Accessibility Committee.
- C. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Transportation and Mobility Committee.
- D. Shermis attended bi-weekly meetings of the City’s Digital Accessibility Workgroup.
- E. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Nonprofit Alliance’s Community Outreach Breakfast.
- F. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the Thriving Connections Economic Stability Advisory Group.
- G. Shermis led, and the BMCHRC tabled at, the ADA Anniversary Celebration on August 3, 2024.
- H. Shermis met with a representative of the Lafayette, Indiana, Human Relations Commission on August 5, 2024.
- I. Shermis assisted with a Bloomington Transit Accessibility Training from August 12-16, 2024.
- J. Commissioners Jackson and Crisovan tabled for the BMCHRC at the MCCSC International Families Welcome Event on September 7, 2024.
- K. The BMCHRC tabled at Bloomington PrideFest on September 14, 2024. Chair Shadday spoke at the main stage about the resolution supporting gender-affirming healthcare.

- L. Vosmeier attended the City's Fiesta del Otoño on September 21, 2024.
- M. Commissioner Jackson tabled for the BMCHRC at the Bloomington High School North Latino Family Night on September 23, 2024, with the new Spanish translation of our brochure, "Qué es la discriminación?"
- N. Shermis attended trainings on "ADA 34th Anniversary Update" (07/15/2024), "Assistance Animals are Not Pets" (07/17/2024), "New Accessibility Self-Assessment for Arts and Culture Organizations" (08/08/2024), and "A Welcoming Storefront: Making Your Business More Accessible for Customers with Disabilities" (09/25/2024).
- O. Vosmeier attended trainings on "Assistance Animals are Not Pets" (07/17/2024), "Coalition Building: Strategies and Perspectives in Disability Advocacy" (07/18/2024), "Expanding Disability Advocacy by Working Together: Successful Practices and Outcomes in Coalition Building" (08/28/2024), and "A Welcoming Storefront: Making Your Business More Accessible for Customers with Disabilities" (09/25/2024).

V. ADA and Accessibility

- A. Shermis reviewed the accessibility of an art installation in the Fourth Street Garage.
- B. Shermis reviewed the accessibility of Mills Pool parking.
- C. Shermis reviewed the accessibility of the Griffy Lake trail map.
- D. Shermis surveyed the accessibility of the Waldron Auditorium for an upcoming theater performance.
- E. Shermis reviewed the accessibility for pedestrians around a construction site.
- F. Shermis and Vosmeier worked on the rollout and implementation of the closed captioning ordinance.
- G. Two callers reported a concrete barrier in the South Walnut post office parking lot that represented an accessibility barrier to mailing items. Investigated the barrier, which seems to be an old, crumbling concrete post by the postbox. No jurisdiction over federal property.
- H. The Spencer Pride Festival requested information about what size of portable ramp to purchase to increase accessibility at their event. Advised them on purchasing one wide enough to meet ADA ramp requirements.
- I. A local pastor requested assistance selecting an emergency evacuation chair for those with disabilities. Offered to look at options and recommend specific features.