Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR)
Minutes of Board Meeting
February 27, 2020 10:30-noon

Location: Jessie Parker Building, Department of Corrections Board Room
510 E. 12th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Members present

- Dr. Ahmadu Baba-Singhri, Commission on the Status of African Americans
- Elizabeth Coonan, Commission on the Status of Women
- Ben Jung, Iowa Commission of Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs
- Karen Mackey, Commission of Native American Affairs
- Judge Jeffrey Neary, Justice Advisory Board
- Michelle Ray-Michalec, Commission of Persons with Disabilities
- San Wong, Director, Iowa Department of Human Rights (ex-officio)

Members Absent

- Jeannette Brown, Commission of Latino Affairs
- Floyd Winter, Public Member (Chair)
- LaSheila Yates, Public Member
- Rep. Holly Brink, Iowa House of Representatives (ex-officio)
- Rep. Phyllis Thede, Iowa House of Representatives (ex-officio)
- Senator Zach Wahls, Iowa Senate (ex-officio)
- Senator Zach Whiting, Iowa Senate (ex-officio)

DHR Staff Present

- Jim Mezera, Fiscal Officer
- Monica Stone, Deputy Director and Administrator, Division of Community Advocacy and Services
- Sonya Streit, Executive Officer
- Tina Shaw, Executive Officer, Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Others Present

- Caroline Barrett, Iowa Attorney General's Office
- Rita Gurung, Commission of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
- Rachelle Hunt Russian, Commission on the Status of Women
- Chris Nipper, Deaf Services Commission
- Tina Meth-Farrington, Justice Advisory Board
- Xiangheng Li, Iowa Youth Congress

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- Peggy Chicoine, American Sign Language Interpreter
- Carrie Wood, American Sign Language Interpreter
- Chloee Narber, American Sign Language Intern Interpreter
- Abby Giambattista, American Sign Language Intern Interpreter

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Beth Coonan chaired the meeting in Chair Winter's absence. Coonan called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 19, 2019, meeting minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

3. Department Report

Director Wong:

- The DHR Day on the Hill was held on February 27, 2020. During the program, Commissioner Karen Mackey gave a presentation on the Native American tribal flags display that is located in the capitol rotunda. Commissioner Ben Jung also presented information about the 2020 Census. The census count will determine allocation of federal funding to the states.

- DHR made budget presentations to the legislative budget subcommittees. Governor had recommended a budget increase of approximately1% for salary adjustment.

4. Board Updates

a. Commission of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
Jung:

- The 2020 Census will begin on April 1, 2020. Jung encouraged completing the census early online or by phone. The census mailing will come later in June or July. Iowa has had a high response rate.

- Mackey stated that a multi-cultural fair will be held on March 29, 2020, in Sioux City with a focus on the census. Kiosks will be set up for Iowans to complete the census online. Translators will also be provided.

- Discussion took place about the census timeline, who gets counted, how to complete it, and outreach.

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- A brief youtube video was shown in the Marshallese language on the importance of being counted and reaching the hard-to-reach communities.

b. Commission of Persons with Disabilities
Ray-Michalec:

- The Commission is meeting on February 27, 2020. A handout was distributed with a summary of activities of the Commission for the past year, as well as their work in reducing employment barriers. (The handout is attached to these minutes).

c. Commission on the Status of African Americans
Dr. Baba-Singhri:

- In observance of Black History Month, a documentary will be shown at Urban Dreams on February 27, 2020, at 6:00 pm.

- The Commission continues to address issues in the areas of employment, criminal justice, discrimination workplace, and racial profiling.

d. Commission of Native American Affairs
Mackey:

- The Commission met February 26, 2020. They approved a white paper on Violence Against Women's Act and its recommendations.

- A representative from the School Administrators of Iowa attended the commission meeting. The Commission is working with school districts to change the direction of using Native Americans as mascots.

- The Native American flag display is now encased at the capitol rotunda.

e. Commission on the Status of Women
Coonan:

- The Commission participated in the 19th amendment centennial celebration on February 14, 2020. Kristen Corey, DHR's Program Planner in the Office on the Status of Women, co-chaired the event. The planning committee is working with Iowa State Historical Society to release 19th amendment celebration content throughout the year.

- The Commission reviewed the pregnancy accommodation bill, which did not make the funnel deadline. They will reexamine for next year.

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- The Commission issued a letter in support of Massachusetts' gender balance legislation.

- Rachelle Hunt Russian, Kristen Corey, and Beth Coonan are accepting speaking engagements to talk about the Commission. They will promote the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame and will raise awareness that the Commission can be a resource for women and girls

- Nominations for the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame are being accepted through April 1, 2020. Applications and materials are on the DHR website. Nominations are also being accepted for the Christin Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice.

- The Commission will meet on February 27, 2020, at 1:00.

5. DHR Division Updates

a. Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) and Justice Advisory Board
Michael:

- The Justice Advisory Board will meet on February 27, 2020, at 1:30.

- CJJP is participating in the Prison Research and Innovation Network of the Urban Institute. The research project will examine the environment of the Correctional Institute for Women and identify ways to improve the culture and climate. The Urban Institute did a site visit this week.

- The CJJP budget was presented to the Justice Systems Appropriations budget subcommittee.

- There will be a joint meeting of the Health and Human Services and the Justice Systems legislative committees. CJJP convened a work group regarding juvenile justice funding and will present the workgroup's report and recommendations to the committees.

- Michael participated in the Governor's FOCUS Committee in Davenport, Iowa. The FOCUS Committee is tasked with criminal justice reform, which have included improving reentry efforts as offenders are released from prison. The focus this year will be on disparities in the criminal justice system. CJJP presented data on current disparities as the FOCUS Committee gathers information and perspectives from law enforcement.

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- A bill (SF579) was introduced that would require law enforcement and jails to collect data on nonresident aliens for traffic stops and arrest. The bill would require CJJP to use that data to develop a report. The bill passed subcommittee but not the full committee.

b. Division of Community Advocacy and Services (CAS)
Stone:

- The Department has created a network of assistance for people coming to Iowa from the Federated States of Micronesia. Many Micronesians are recruited to work in Iowa companies, and because of their status under the Compact of Free Association (COFA), they are able to live and work in the United States. In some cases, these individuals have found that their employment and housing agreement is not what they understood it would be upon their arrival. As a result, they have needed access to services to know their rights, find alternate employment and housing. The Department has worked closely with long-time Iowa residents originally from Micronesia, local agencies and legal assistance providers in several cities in Iowa to build a network of assistance that is accessible to these migrants.

- The Department of Human Rights is advising Lutheran Services of Iowa (LSI) in the development of a program that will assist Iowans who wish to sponsor unaccompanied migrant children out of federal immigration custody. LSI will be hiring staff in Iowa to guide and assist people through the sponsorship process.

- The Department presented its budget, including the CAS budget, to the Administration and Regulation budget subcommittee.

- There were 150,000 logins to the Iowa Talent Bank.

C. Division of Community Action Agencies

- A written report was provided in lieu of a verbal report.

6. Public comment – Rachelle Hunt Russian offered additional information on the census.

7. The next meeting will be scheduled at a later time.

8. Ben moved to adjourn, seconded by Mackey. The motion carried by voice vote. Meeting adjourned.

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Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

Some Examples of the Activities of the Commission of Persons with Disabilities

- Assisted with writing resumes, conducted mock interviews, and directed individuals to resources where they can secure clothing for their interview; Helped in any way possible to make their interview experience a success
- Provided education on the Americans with Disabilities Act and an understanding on what it means to search for and secure reasonable accommodations
- Provided networking information and resources on employment, housing, food, insurance and many other essentials that the consumers I have had the privilege to work with need
- Advocated for persons with disabilities to elected individuals and political candidates and expressed their concerns
- Expressed concerns to businesses regarding accessibility and the hiring of persons with disabilities
- Discussions with Area Transit Providers around transportation availability in rural and urban areas
- Discussions with employers around hiring individuals with disabilities
- Discussions with employers who employee individuals with disabilities and advocating hiring with other employers
- Met with several school districts around transition planning for persons with disabilities and employment options for transitional youth while in attending school and after graduation
- Attended three Iowa Legislative Coffees January, February and March 2019 in Western Iowa
- Attended August meeting where four of the Candidates for the 4th Congressional District were in attendance; Spoke to the candidates and incumbent around child mental health services and employment for persons with disabilities
- Attended Southwest Iowa Mental Health and Disabilities Services – Advisory Meeting(s)
- Attended Harrison County – Healthy Harrison / Behavioral Health Coalition monthly meetings
- Attended the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) Annual Conference April 2019
- Attended the Iowa Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Fall 2019

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According to Cornell University's Disability Status Report:

- One in ten (10.3%) working age persons (21-64) has a disability (18.3 million).
- Only a third (33.9%) of working-age people with disabilities were employed compared with the three quarters (75.4%) of people without disabilities.
- Over a quarter (27.0 percent) of working-age Americans with disabilities lived in poverty, compared to 11.9 percent of those without disabilities.
- Nearly one in five (18.4%) of civilian veterans ages 21-64 have a Veterans Administration service connected disability.

The Commission of Persons with Disabilities exists to promote the employment of Iowans with disabilities and reduce barriers to employment by providing information, referral, assessment and guidance, training, and negotiation services to employers and citizens with disabilities.

All Iowans with disabilities are able to access employment matching their abilities, interests, and, economic needs.

This Commission seeks meaningful support toward eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities and strengthening the enforcement of the ADA. Persons with disabilities and mental illness have skills, abilities and talents and should have equal employment opportunities. We are reminding all Iowans of their importance. Inclusion is an integral right that should never be overlooked or forgotten. The Commission of Persons with Disabilities is respectfully requesting the legislature's consideration and attention in the promotion of our goals and mission to eliminate employment barriers.

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