



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
CITY OF CHICAGO

STATEMENT BY MONA NORIEGA, CHAIR AND COMMISSIONER
CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
TO THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RELATIONS
ON "URGING GOVERNOR RAUNER TO SIGN HOUSE BILL 3711" AND THE "RESTORE ILLINOIS
COMMISSION ON DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIMES"
JUNE 19, 2017

Good Morning Chairman Dowell and members of the Human Relations Committee. My name is Mona Noriega, and I serve as the Chair and Commissioner of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR). As you know, the Commission is the civil rights agency for the City of Chicago. We enforce the Chicago Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances and its protections against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and bonding. We investigate and adjudicate complaints of discrimination based on 16 protected classes such as race, ancestry, national origin, and religion. The Commission also assists victims of hate crimes, mediates community tensions, and delivers educational workshops on a variety of human relations topics including bullying, prejudice reduction, and conflict resolution.

I am here today to applaud this Committee for convening this hearing and to voice my support for the two very important resolutions before you, to urge Governor Bruce Rauner ; 1) to sign House Bill 3711 and 2) to restore the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes. Since 2011, the CCHR has convened the Hate Crimes Coalition, stakeholders who address hate crimes including the CPD's Civil Rights Unit, Cook County State's Attorney, Cook County Sherriff's Office, the FBI, and advocacy groups that include the Anti-Defamation League and the Center on Halsted. We deliver anti-bullying trainings in schools to parents, students and teachers, facilitate peace circles, and provide conflict mediation so that community based disputes do not escalate into hate crimes. And most importantly, we help victims of hate crimes navigate the criminal court process, and provide much needed support while they participate in the prosecution of hate crime perpetrators.

The CCHR also works to foster trust between law enforcement and the community. For example, we partner with a community group called the International Human Relations Committee to host holiday gatherings at the 8th Police District, 17th Police District, and tonight we will help host an Iftar at the 25th Police District. The holiday and inter-faith Ramadan celebrations bring people of different faiths, mostly Muslims and Christians, and people of different races; African Americans, Latinos, and white community members together in their local police stations, to break bread and build community.

It is also important to note that while historically hate crimes are most often based on race, followed by religion and sexual orientation, we must remember that there are other communities that are also impacted by hate that may or may not be reporting them that we must reach out to, which would include the immigrant, disability, and transgender communities.

It is from the experience of working with these targeted communities that I speak when calling attention to the need to strengthen hate crime enforcement and prosecution by giving victims an easier means by which to bring a civil suit as represented in House Bill 3711 and to convene the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes as a means of fostering community and reducing hate crimes in the State of Illinois.

The FBI's most recent annual report of hate crimes noted an increase in the number of reported hate crimes in 2015. This increase is particularly alarming as it is widely recognized that what is reported to law enforcement is not reflective of the actual number of hate crimes committed. Hate crimes cause unique harm, both to the victim and to the many targeted communities. Effective responses to hate crimes require a clear understanding of the nature of hate crimes and the critical importance of reporting and thus having a government body convened will help to create education and reduce hate crimes.

Similar to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes was created to foster education efforts and help implement policies and state laws that battle violence and acts of discrimination which are based on ethnicity, religion, skin color, gender, disability or sexual orientation. All appointed Commissioners pledge to create a way to help calm tensions created by discrimination and reduce hate related violence against individuals or groups.¹ Given that hate crimes across the world and in the state of Illinois continue to be reported and are thus an everyday reality for targeted communities, it is important the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes be convened and deliver on the important work of addressing Hate Crimes in the State of Illinois.

When convened, we can look forward to the Illinois Commission working, as does the Chicago Commission of Human Relations, and as stated in their mission, with law enforcement, the courts, religious leaders, schools, community organizations and social service agencies to foster acceptance and tolerance; and to work to educate people on ways they can fight discrimination and hate-motivated violence.²

In closing, I thank Chairman Dowell and the Human Relations Committee for continuing to call attention to hate crimes and by holding this hearing on an issue that continually finds itself in the news. And I thank you for urging Governor Bruce Rauner to sign the two resolutions before you; 1) to sign House Bill 3711 and 2) to restore the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes.

¹ <https://www.illinois.gov/cdhc/Pages/commission.aspx>

² <https://www.illinois.gov/cdhc/Pages/commission.aspx>