



Maine Human Rights Commission

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COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

August 25th, 2025, MEETING

Held in Hybrid Format - In Person (19 Union Street, Augusta, Maine) and via ZOOM

Commissioner David chaired the meeting on Zoom and called it to order at 8:31 AM. Also present were Commissioners Douglas, O'Brien, and Sanders.

AGENDA

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to adopt the Agenda and Consent Agenda to accept the Investigators' recommended decisions in each of the cases listed on the Consent Agenda (see listing on Page 4).

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

MINUTES

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to adopt the July Commission Meeting Minutes.

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

ADMINISTRATION

Monthly reports: Commission Counsel Archer Hirsch discussed reporting on the following Commission activities:

- Personnel: A report was placed on file. One Investigator has recently left the Commission.
- Compliance: Since the last meeting, there have been 2 unsuccessful conciliations and 1 successful conciliation, with 5 reasonable grounds cases remaining in active conciliation.
- New Charges: 47 new complaints were filed in July, with a total of 63 new Respondents.
- Withdrawals and dismissals: 35 issued in July, including 2 administrative dismissals, 14 right-to-sue letters, and 11 settlements (6 private settlements and 5 settlements through the MHRC's mediation program) with a total of \$230,500 to Complainants.

New Business: The new Commission Meeting Schedule for 2026 has been prepared and is ready for review.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to adopt the 2026 Commission Meeting Schedule.

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

At approximately 8:45 A.M. Commissioner David began the Hearing Agenda.

CASES VOTED ON IN A.M. SESSION

E23-0271, Gretchen Pianka (Portland) v. Central Maine Pediatrics / Central Maine Health Care (Lewiston).* Attorneys Harper Weissburg and Peter Callaghan presented the Respondent's position. Attorney Maria Fox presented the Complainant's position. Investigator Jane O'Reilly reviewed her report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to find there are **Reasonable Grounds** to believe that Central Maine Pediatrics/Central Maine Healthcare discriminated against Gretchen Pianka on the basis of sex (discharge), and conciliation of this claim should be attempted in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(3).

3 in favor | 0 opposed | 1 Recused (Sanders).

Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner Douglas, to find there are **Reasonable Grounds** to believe that Central Maine Pediatrics/Central Maine Healthcare retaliated against Gretchen Pianka for engaging in MHRA- and/or WPA-protected activity (reports of discrimination), and conciliation of this claim should be attempted in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(3).

2 in favor | 1 opposed | 1 Recused (Sanders).

Commissioner O'Brien moved, seconded by Commissioner David, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Central Maine Pediatrics/Central Maine Healthcare discriminated against Gretchen Pianka on the basis of sex (terms and conditions), and this claim should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

3 in favor | 0 opposed | 1 Recused (Sanders).

Commissioner Douglas moved, seconded by Commissioner David, to find there are **Reasonable Grounds** to believe that Central Maine Pediatrics/Central Maine Healthcare retaliated against Gretchen Pianka for engaging in WPA- protected activity (reports of risk to health and safety of others), and conciliation of this claim should be attempted in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(3).

3 in favor | 0 opposed | 1 Recused (Sanders).

ED23-0280, Christine Duplissis (Leeds) v. MSAD 52 (Turner). Christine Duplissis presented her position. Attorney Tom Trenholm presented the Respondent's position. Investigator Robert Beauchesne reviewed his report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that MSDA 52 discriminated against Christine Duplissis o/b/o minor child on the basis of sexual orientation and/or race, and the complaint should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

E23-0292, Katherine Moulton (Wells) v. Lockwood Hills Federal (Portsmouth, NH).* Attorneys Heather Hearne and Mina Ghantous presented the Respondent's position. Katherine Moulton presented her position. Investigator Alex Brindley reviewed their report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to find there are **Reasonable Grounds** to believe that Lockwood Hills Federal, LLC discriminated against Katherine Moulton on the basis of disability, and conciliation should be attempted in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(3).

* Indicates a case in which a "reasonable grounds" finding is recommended

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

E23-0340, Catherine McSweeney (Portland) v. Drummond Woodsum (Portland). Catherine McSweeney presented her position. Attorney Peter Felmy presented the Respondent's position. Investigator Angela Morse reviewed her report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Drummond Woodsum discriminated against Catherine McSweeney in violation of the MHRA, and the complaint should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

E23-0377, Brenda Tomasz (Vassalboro) v. Hershey's Ice Cream (Harrisburg, PA). Brenda Tomasz presented her position. Attorney Lindsey Snavely presented the Respondent's position. Investigator Angela Morse reviewed her report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner David, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Hershey Creamery Company discriminated against Brenda Tomasz on the basis of age and/or sex, and the complaint should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

E23-0406, Michael Emerson (Belgrade) v. Lowes (Mooresville, NC). Attorney Sally Morris presented the Complainant's position. Attorney Jeff Peterson presented the Respondent's position. Investigator Carrie McCarter reviewed their report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Lowe's discriminated against Michael Emerson on the basis of disability, and the complaint should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

3 in favor | 0 opposed | 1 Recused (Sanders).

H25-0036ABC, Joelene Couture (Lewiston) v. Rose Robinson (Lewiston), Susan Hilchey (Lisbon), Two and Ken Valley Housing Group Limited Partnership (Bethesda, MD). Joelene Couture presented her position. Attorney Danelle Milone presented the Respondent's, Two and Ken Valley Housing Group Limited Partnership, position. Investigator Alex Brindley reviewed their report and recommendations and answered the Commissioner's questions.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner Douglas, to find there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Rose Robinson discriminated against Joelene Couture on the basis of disability, there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Susan Hilchey discriminated against Joelene Couture on the basis of disability, there are No Reasonable Grounds to believe that Two and Ken Valley Housing Group, LP discriminated against Joelene Couture on the basis of disability, and the complaint should be dismissed in accordance with 5 M.R.S. § 4612(2).

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At approximately 12:22 P.M., Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner Douglas, to go into executive session to discuss pending or contemplated litigation and the Commission's legal rights and duties with Commission Counsel pursuant to 1 M.R.S. §405(6)(E).

* Indicates a case in which a "reasonable grounds" finding is recommended

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

At approximately 12:35 P.M., Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner Douglas, to come out of Executive Session.

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

Commissioner Sanders moved, seconded by Commissioner Douglas, to approve settlement in H23-0374-A, *Gallant v. Greater Brunswick Housing Corporation*.

4 in favor | 0 opposed.

At approximately 12:38 P.M. the meeting was adjourned.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda is a listing of cases scheduled on the Commission's meeting agenda in which there was no written disagreement to the Investigator's recommendation. Commissioners considered these cases without oral argument by the parties.

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| E23-0262AB | Kimbra Ritchie (Eastport) v. Eastport School Committee (Eastport), Eastport Elementary School (Eastport) | NRG |
| E23-0304 | Megan Starrak (North Berwick) v. VYRAL Marketing (Omaha, NE) | NRG |
| E23-0327 | Darrin Fillebrown (Rockland) v. Maine Department of Corrections (Augusta) | NRG |
| E23-0359 | Theonille Beninka (Portland) v. Granite Bay Care, Inc. (Scarborough) | NRG |
| E23-0367 | Jessica Mitchell (Hudson) v. Versant Power (Bangor) | NRG |
| E23-0369 | Marcy Lagerson (Auburn) v. LabCorp (Burlington, NC) | NRG |
| E23-0384 | Kevin Cookson (Augusta) v. St. Mary's Health System (Lewiston) | NRG |
| E23-0389AB | Christopher Clarke (Skowhegan) v. Applegreen USA (Kennebunk), Jeffrey Bennett (Kennebunk) | NRG |
| E23-0436 | Victor Ureño (Rochester, NH) v. Texas Instruments (South Portland) | NRG |
| E24-0016AB | Richard Horn (Scarborough) v. Luke's Lobster LLC (Portland), Luke Holden (Saco) | NRG |

TABLED

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| E23-0289 | William Norelus (Lewiston) v. Procter & Gamble (Cincinnati, OH) |
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* Indicates a case in which a "reasonable grounds" finding is recommended