



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

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Oregon Council on Civil Rights Holds Initial Meeting

Council brings together leaders from across Oregon to fight unlawful discrimination through increased collaboration, outreach, and partnership on key civil rights issues

PORTLAND, OR- At the inaugural meeting in Portland today, the Oregon Council on Civil Rights (OCCR) got right to work. State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, who appointed the Council, presented them with their first assignment: developing an action plan to address the issue of equal pay for equal work. The OCCR is well-suited to tackling this complex issue because the Council brings together civil rights leaders from across Oregon to increase collaboration, outreach, education and partnerships between state enforcement efforts, advocacy groups, employers and citizens.

Co-Chairs James Mason (Providence Health Systems) and Connie Ashbrook (Oregon Tradeswomen) led the 25-member Council in developing an initial agenda to address the crucial civil rights issues faced by Oregonians. Like Commissioner Avakian, they believe that continuing pay disparities between workers doing the same job are an obstacle to dealing with other civil rights issues.

Historically, Oregon women and minorities have earned less than their white, male colleagues and co-workers. While the OCCR will advise the state generally on all matters related to education about and the enforcement of civil rights in Oregon, Commissioner Avakian looks to them for leadership on this specific, historic problem.

“I look forward to working with the OCCR as they address the issue of equal pay for equal work and other important civil rights matters in the coming months and years,” said Commissioner Avakian. “I am confident that the team we have assembled for the OCCR will be a key player in advancing civil rights in Oregon and fighting unlawful discrimination of all forms.”

Starting with this initial meeting, the OCCR will meet quarterly. Their work on civil rights education and enforcement will include: the administration of protected class provisions; making recommendations on new and existing civil rights protections and rulemaking to administer civil rights laws most effectively; and fostering better enforcement, outreach and education efforts to aggressively fight unlawful discrimination in Oregon.

“Bringing an end to unlawful discrimination takes communication, collaboration and broad community partnerships,” said OCCR Co-Chair James Mason. “Working with BOLI and my fellow Council Members, I look forward to helping our state advance the cause of civil rights and address the root causes of unlawful discrimination in Oregon.”

As head of the agency charged with protecting Oregonians’ civil rights in employment, housing, and public accommodations, Commissioner Avakian appointed the OCCR pursuant to his authority under

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The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.

ORS 659A.815 to ensure the state has a dedicated group to fight unlawful discrimination and represent the interests of the state's diverse communities.

“I am honored to serve on the OCCR with these individuals who bring such a wealth of knowledge and breadth of expertise in civil rights work in Oregon,” said OCCR Co-Chair Connie Ashbrook. “By bringing together leaders from such diverse communities from across the state, the Commissioner has taken an important step in Oregon’s fight to end unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all Oregonians.”

To learn more about the OCCR, its membership, and about upcoming meetings, please visit: <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/CRD/OCCR.shtml>.

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