



Maine Human Rights Commission

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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February 4, 2021

The Honorable Catherine Breen, Senate Chair
The Honorable Teresa Pierce, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0005

The Honorable Anne Carney, Senate Chair
The Honorable Thom Harnett, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 42, the 2021-2022 Emergency Supplemental Budget

Dear Senators Breen and Carney, Representatives Pierce and Harnett, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and on the Judiciary:

The Maine Human Rights Commission (“MHRC”) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the initiatives regarding the MHRC within LD 42, “An Act Making Certain Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government”. The General Fund appropriations reductions for the MHRC total \$49,550 (see page A-64).

A small, quasi-independent entity with a single program (Human Rights Commission – Regulation 0150), the MHRC was established in 1971 to promote the full enjoyment of human rights and personal dignity of all inhabitants of the State by attempting to prevent discrimination in employment, housing, access to public accommodations, education, extension of credit and offensive names. Consisting of five MHRC Commissioners of diverse political parties and their staff, the MHRC has the duty of investigating, conciliating and at times litigating discrimination cases under the Maine Human Rights Act. The MHRC program serves the public interest by providing an administrative body to evaluate complaints of discrimination in lieu of having complaints filed directly in court. The MHRC resolves a significant number of the complaints filed with it prior to any full investigation, provides guidance on interpretations of the law, and makes recommendations for further legislation or executive action concerning infringements on human rights in Maine.

The MHRC has 13.5 staff positions, 10 of which in the FY2021 budget are funded in whole or in part by the General Fund (equal to about eight FTE). Our other positions are funded via our federal partnership agreements with two federal anti-discrimination agencies, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”); the contracts

vary annually depending on production and availability of federal funds in a given year. In this current budget year, we project we will receive \$563,813 in federal funds to support current fiscal year operations.

The Governor’s **FY2021 Emergency Supplemental Budget Request** contains two reductions in MHRC General Fund monies, both of which occurred pursuant to the Governor’s curtailment via Financial Order 001152 F1. These also are reflected below in our agency’s FY 2022-2023 Biennial Budgets.

Fund	Emergency Supplemental			Biennial		
	21 Base	21 EM SUP	21 Revised	2022	2023	Total
General Fund - PS	\$ 931,710	\$ 37,550	\$ 894,160	\$ 987,369	\$ 991,195	\$ 1,978,564
General Fund - AO	\$ 44,117	\$ 12,000	\$ 32,117	\$ 57,689	\$ 57,689	\$ 115,378
GF Total	\$ 975,827	\$ 49,550	\$ 926,277	\$ 1,045,058	\$ 1,048,884	\$ 2,093,942
EEOC - PS	\$ 196,958	\$ -	\$ 196,958	\$ 224,980	\$ 224,386	\$ 449,366
EEOC - AO	\$ 98,145	\$ -	\$ 98,145	\$ 98,145	\$ 98,145	\$ 196,290
EEOC Total	\$ 295,103	\$ -	\$ 295,103	\$ 323,125	\$ 322,531	\$ 645,656
HUD - PS	\$ 156,603	\$ -	\$ 156,603	\$ 184,318	\$ 182,582	\$ 366,900
HUD - AO	\$ 112,107	\$ -	\$ 112,107	\$ 115,930	\$ 116,145	\$ 232,075
HUD Total	\$ 268,710	\$ -	\$ 268,710	\$ 300,248	\$ 298,727	\$ 598,975
Seminar - AO	\$ 62,024	\$ -	\$ 62,024	\$ 62,024	\$ 62,024	\$ 124,048
Publications - AO	\$ 1,840	\$ -	\$ 1,840	\$ 1,840	\$ 1,840	\$ 3,680
Mediation - AO	\$ 44,000	\$ -	\$ 44,000	\$ 44,000	\$ 44,000	\$ 88,000
Other - 014 Total	\$ 107,864	\$ -	\$ 107,864	\$ 107,864	\$ 107,864	\$ 215,728
	\$ 1,755,368	\$ 49,550	\$ 1,705,818	\$ 1,884,159	\$ 1,885,870	\$ 3,770,029

The first initiative is a reduction of \$12,000 in General Fund “All Other” monies which had been allotted to renting meeting space for, and to providing security at, monthly public Commission meetings. This reduction “to align with projected actual expenditures” was available because the MHRC’s monthly public meetings have not been held in person since March 2, 2020. The second initiative is a reduction of \$37,550 in General Fund “Personal Services” monies which had been allotted as part of salary and benefits payments for the MHRC’s Senior Paralegal, who voluntarily reduced their hours as a cost-savings measure.

Thank you for allowing the MHRC the opportunity to provide this testimony. The MHRC will be glad to provide additional information at your convenience, including at the LD 42 work session(s).

Sincerely,

Amy M. Sneirson
Executive Director

Cc: Maine Human Rights Commissioners