



STATE OF WASHINGTON
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Addendum to original cover letter:

This week's events have caused me to reflect upon the efficacy of The Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC) and its ability to fulfill its mission during this critical time under the current funding limitations and the possibility of future additional cuts. Although we understand the difficult revenue situation that the state is currently facing, continued inadequate funding of the WSHRC perpetuates the status quo that is currently not working for the people of the state of Washington.

Although unintended, it demonstrates inequities within the state of Washington with regard to those who are unable to afford private representation to investigate their concerns and therefore, seek out the WSHRC to investigate their complaints of discrimination.

It is evident by the events of the past week that people are frustrated with the systems that serve them. They are similarly frustrated with our agency who is there to serve. This is due to lack of investigators, because we lost so much during the last recession and have not recovered from it.

The agency's lack of funding is inequitable. Washingtonians have the right to be free from discrimination and file complaints when they have been victims of discrimination and experience inequity themselves. The expectation is that the state agency charged with that responsibility will investigate those complaints promptly and seek timely redress, if necessary.

With each budget cut that the agency experiences there is further erosion of the agency's ability to fulfill its legislated mission and denies equitable due process to those seeking justice.

Investigations are the core of our work and investigators conduct that work. Inadequate investigator staffing prohibits the agency from fulfilling the expectations of the people of the state of Washington. Many of the people who file discrimination complaints are already marginalized in our state. They expect and should have a thorough and timely investigation of their issues and an appropriate remedy. If we want to have an equitable state government, it is imperative that we have an appropriately funded Human Rights Commission.

Thank you for listening,

Sharon Ortiz,
Executive Director

Budget Savings Options 2020

Dollars in Thousands

Agency: Human Rights Commission

Agency Priority H, M, L	Impact 1-5	Program/Activity	GF-5				Other Funds				FTE Change		Brief Description and Rationale	Effective Date (MM/YY)	Impacts of Reductions and Other Considerations	Law/Reg. Change Required (cite)
			FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	Fund	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 20				
M	1	Reduce Goods and Services		74									Training for staff will be eliminated, travel will be reduced by 82%, legal research services will be eliminated, In-person Commission meetings will be eliminated.	7/20	Commissioners will be unable to interact in person or with the public. Staff will not receive current training that is necessary to stay updated on current case law and other legal updates; We have nothing else we can eliminate.	NA
H	1,2	Furloughs for all staff		157									Reduced hours for all staff will mean fewer hours to investigate cases and the backlog of 230 cases will continue to increase. Agency will only be able to process contract cases.	7/20	The agency will no longer be able to fulfill another part of its mission. It will only have the capacity to investigate contract cases that generate revenue. Discrimination in places of public accommodations, credit and insurance would not be investigated.	RCW49.60.175-178;49.60.215
H	1,2	1 Investigator position to remain unfilled		73									Expanded authority to conduct pregnancy discrimination investigations will not be exercised.	7/20	Would not be able to enforce statute	RCW 49.60.230
H	1,2,3	2 Investigator positions to remain unfilled		147									New Investigators to reduce backlog of cases will not be hired. Backlog will continue to increase; would limit investigations to contract cases.	7/20	The agency will no longer be able to fulfill another part of its mission. It will only have the capacity to investigate contract cases that generate revenue. Discrimination in places of public accommodations, credit and insurance would not be investigated.	RCW49.60.175-178;49.60.215

Priority:
 L = Low priority agency activity or program
 M = Medium priority agency activity or program
 H = High priority agency activity or program

Impact:
 1 = Allows continuation of the program/activity at a reduced level
 2 = Eliminates the ability to perform program objectives
 3 = Eliminates agency function
 4 = Long term implications (moves the problem to next biennium)
 5 = Short term (reduction to one time increase)