

# NC Commission on Inclusion

*2023-2024 Annual Report*

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	2
2023 & 2024 NC Commission on Inclusion Members .....	3
2023 & 2024 NC Commission on Inclusion Committees .....	4
Overview of Meetings .....	5
Focus Areas .....	8
Policy Development Committee .....	8
Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Committee .....	8
DEI Guidance & Rights Protection Committee .....	8
Policy Recommendations .....	9
Policy Development Committee .....	9
Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Committee .....	9
DEI Guidance & Rights Protection Committee .....	9
Full Commission .....	10
2025 Planned Meeting Dates .....	11
Annex.....	12

## Introduction

On October 18, 2017, Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order No. 24, charging the Secretary of the Department of Administration (DOA) with creating and staffing the North Carolina Commission on Inclusion (COI) with members from state government, private businesses, and non-profit organizations.

[Executive Order No. 24<sup>1</sup>](#) addresses the policies and procedures prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in state employment services and contracts under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Governor. The protective measures within this executive order reference Prohibited Grounds which include (but are not limited to) race, color, ethnicity, nation origin, age, disability, sex, pregnancy, religion, National Guard or veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.

The duties of the Commission on Inclusion are to help DOA, and the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) identify additional policies and measures that would promote inclusion and address discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on Prohibited Grounds. DOA is charged with adopting rules and policies necessary to further the Commission's goals and objectives.

The Commission's goal is to leverage diversity and foster inclusion to deliver the best public service for the residents of North Carolina.

Objectives of the Commission include:

- Identifying and sharing best practices with state government.
- Providing strategies that promote economic efficiency and accountability, and attracting, growing and retaining an excellent workforce.
- Identifying trends and actions that create a competitive advantage for North Carolinians.
- Raising awareness for the importance of diversity and inclusion.

The North Carolina Commission on Inclusion respectfully submits this report which highlights work completed by the Commission since the submission of the 2021-2022 Report.

---

<sup>1</sup> NC Executive Order 24, Policies Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation in State Employment, Services, and Contracts under the Jurisdiction of the Office of the Governor, <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/documents/files/executive-order-24-0/open> (2017).

## 2023 & 2024 NC Commission on Inclusion Members

**Pamela Cashwell**

*Secretary, Department of Administration, Chairperson*

**Cristina España**

*Deputy Director OPE, Office of the Governor*

**Shae Albrecht**

*Global Program Manager, Red Hat*

**Paula Kohut**

*Lawyer, Kohut & Adams, P.A.*

**Lydia Lavelle**

*Professor of Law, NC Central University*

**Delores Ali**

*Business Owner, Blue Heavens Vacation*

**Dr. Kim Ramsey-White\***

*Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health*

**Chauncy Barnhill**

*Executive Board Member- Chairman, Disability-IN North Carolina*

**R. Andrew Spainhour**

*General Counsel, Replacements Inc.*

**Cecelia Surratt**

*Chair, Morganton Human Relations Council & CEO, Select 2000*

**Nancy Astrike**

*Director of EEO & Accessibility/Workforce Solutions, OSHR*

**Charles Lopez\***

*Head of Human Resources, Greenscapes, Inc.*

**Dr. Charrise Hollingsworth**

*Human Services Researcher, American Institute of Research*

**Cristal Figueroa**

*Data Director, Poder NC Action*

**Aleshia Hunt**

*Student Government Association Financial Advisor, East Carolina University*

**Glenda K. Farrell**

*Chief Deputy Director, OSHR*

**Saira Estrada\***

*Language Access & Immigrant Integration, City of Charlotte*

\* Newly appointed in either 2023 or 2024

## 2023 & 2024 NC Commission on Inclusion Committees

Policy Development	Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention	DEI Guidance & Rights Protection
Shae Albrecht ( <i>Chair</i> )	Delores Ali ( <i>Chair</i> )	Cecelia Surratt ( <i>Chair</i> )
Nancy Astrike	Chauncy Barnhill	Lydia Lavelle
R. Andrew Spainhour	Aleshia Hunt	Paula Kohut
Dr. Charrise Hollingsworth	Glenda K. Farrell	Dr. Kim Ramsey-White
Cristal Figueroa	Charles Lopez	Saira Estrada
		Cristina España

# Overview of Meetings

## **2023**

The NC Commission on Inclusion met quarterly on April 5<sup>th</sup>, July 12<sup>th</sup>, October 11<sup>th</sup>, and December 6<sup>th</sup> both in-person and virtually. Throughout these full Commission meetings, members were able to actively collaborate on committee projects through numerous working sessions, report-outs from committee chairs, and open discussion opportunities.

Further, members heard from several partners in North Carolina's government on relevant issues including:

- Evin Grant - *Policy Director, NC DOA*
- Nancy Astrike - *Director of EEO & Accessibility/Workforce Solutions, NC OSHR*
- Dayson Pasion - *Teacher Advisor, Office of the Governor*
- Ziev Dalsheim-Kahane - *Education Policy Fellow, Office of the Governor*
- Michael Cline - *Demographic & Economic Analyst, Office of State Budget & Management*
- Jonathan Guarine - *Economist, NC Dept. of Commerce*



## **2024**

The NC Commission on Inclusion met quarterly on April 10<sup>th</sup>, July 17<sup>th</sup>, October 9<sup>th</sup>, and December 4<sup>th</sup> both in-person and virtually. Throughout these full Commission meetings and the October committee working session, members were able to continue actively collaborating on committee projects by reporting out updates and openly discussing projects. Further, members were able to hear from more partners in North Carolina's government on relevant issues including:

- Evin Grant - *Policy Director, NC DOA*
- David Elliott - *Deputy Secretary of Advocacy, NC DOA*
- Lateisha Thrash - *Director of Reentry Services, NC DAC*
- Jordan Etters - *Program & Policy Coordinator, NC DOA*



At the end of 2022, Commission members in collaboration with the DOA support team established the three subcommittees referenced in this report. Throughout 2023 and 2024, the Commission on Inclusion subcommittees have met continuously outside of the quarterly Commission meetings as needed to move their work and action items forward. Each subcommittee worked closely with both Department of Administration and Office of State Human Resources representatives.



## Key Priorities

The Commission on Inclusion members developed the following key priorities for 2023:

- (i) Creating purposeful and effective subcommittees for the Commission
- (ii) Understanding the effect of diverse populations on North Carolina's economy
- (iii) Prioritizing continued support for relevant DOA boards or commissions
- (iv) Appropriate partnerships with collaborators in state government

The Commission on Inclusion members developed the following key priorities for 2024:

- (i) Active subcommittee meetings and incorporating working sessions into full Commission meetings to increase cross-committee collaborations
- (ii) Goal setting with actionable steps to achieving goals
- (iii) Understanding the changing climate surrounding DEI and its impact(s)
- (iv) Understanding and advising on the job vacancies across state government agencies
- (v) Continuing appropriate partnerships with collaborators in state government



## Focus Areas

To advance the work of the Commission on Inclusion, the members, divided into subcommittees, focused their efforts on the following areas throughout 2023 and 2024:

### Policy Development Committee

- State employee entry, pulse, and exit surveys
- Utilizing data metrics to inform policy development
- Reviewing the existing agency policies regarding recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts

### Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Committee

- Standardized, equitable recruitment and hiring practices among all state agencies
- Reviewing the current state of job vacancies in North Carolina government agencies
- Best practices to promote the job-related benefits specific to state employees
- Reviewing job postings with updated language relating to Executive Order No. 278

### DEI Guidance & Rights Protection Committee

- Language access efforts in state government hiring and employment practices
- Understanding how Artificial Intelligence can be used in state government equitably and inclusively
- Supporting the continuation of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in North Carolina

## Policy Recommendations

With the Chief Deputy and Director of Diversity and Workforce Services serving as members of the COI, the NC Office of State Human Resources works closely with the Commission on Inclusion to identify opportunities to develop policies and measures that promote inclusion and address discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on Prohibited Grounds. Utilizing discussions on the above focus areas, the Commission on Inclusion subcommittees recommend the following:

### Policy Development Committee

1. Consider the NC Department of Transportation's (DOT) employee exit survey pilot program in establishing standardized exit surveys for state government positions that can inform policy decisions for recruitment and retention practices.
2. Led by the Office of State Human Resources, to encourage hiring managers and human resources leadership toward a more data-driven decision-making framework based in performance metrics.

### Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Committee

1. To continuously advocate for the highest level of people-focused benefits for North Carolina state employees and their families.
2. To actively market the benefits provided exclusively to state government employees as a means to attract new talent and retain current employees in state agencies, following the promotional efforts of the Office of State Human Resources as an example. Further, agencies and hiring managers should actively promote total compensation packages as opposed to a specific focus on salaries.
3. To establish a recommended checklist of tools, resources, and information for state agencies to utilize in all new employee orientations and onboarding processes. Further, one specific item to include should be a welcome video from the Governor.
4. Under the guidance of the Office of State Human Resources, to utilize the new OSHR HR Professional Development Training Program for recruiter training and hiring practices. Agencies should actively provide constructive feedback on this program. In doing so, a level of standardization can be achieved in establishing clear, equitable, and effective recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts across state government.

### DEI Guidance & Rights Protection Committee

1. To formally publish the draft resolution created by this subcommittee which (i) opposes the elimination/defunding of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and (ii) identifies inclusion as the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees from all backgrounds.
2. To continue supporting Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and other equal employment opportunity laws.
3. To establish language access needs assessment policy and toolkit support; subsequently, efforts to promote Language Access Plans, multi-lingual evaluations for

employees, and creating opportunities for candidates to interview for state positions in their primary language.

4. To include inclusive restrooms in new state construction projects that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act inclusivity requirements.
5. To investigate and better understand equity and inclusivity in the use of Artificial Intelligence in government agencies.

## Full Commission

In reflecting on Executive Order No. 24 and the combined experiences of current Commission members, all three subcommittees collaboratively recommend the following:

1. The Commission on Inclusion should continue under a new administrative umbrella as it bridges the interactions between the private and state sectors in a meaningful partnership.
2. [Executive Order No. 24 \(2017\)](https://governor.nc.gov/documents/files/executive-order-no-24-policies-prohibiting-discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation-state/open)<sup>2</sup> expanded the protected classes of persons covered under federal and state law from discrimination, harassment, or retaliation in employment, services and programs, contracts, grant implementation, and state procurement. Additionally, EO 24 established the Commission on Inclusion to serve as stakeholder support to NC DOA and the Office of State Human Resources.

The Commission on Inclusion acknowledges the importance of maintaining the protections and purpose of EO 24 and recommends a review of EO24 to ensure it continues to support the protection of the people of North Carolina.

In 2025, the Commission on Inclusion will continue to advance EO 24 within the following focus areas under the new Governor's administration:

- Equity Guidance & Employee Rights Protection
- Policy & Procedure Development
- Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Best Practices
- Advising OSHR & DOA

The Commission will continue to be flexible in advising DOA and OSHR on updates to policies, procedures, and best practices as needed.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://governor.nc.gov/documents/files/executive-order-no-24-policies-prohibiting-discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation-state/open>

## **2025 Planned Meeting Dates**

***March 12, 2025***

***June 11, 2025***

***September 10, 2025***

***December 3, 2025***

## Annex

### **DEI Guidance & Rights Protection Drafted Resolution:**

#### RESOLUTION OPPOSING ELIMINATION AND DEFUNDING OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Commission on Inclusion (Commission) was created by North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper’s Executive Order No. 24 on October 18, 2017; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is comprised of members from state government, private businesses, and non-profit organizations to (i) assist the Department of Administration (DOA) and the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) in carrying out their duties under the Executive Order and (ii) identify additional policies and measures that would promote inclusion and address discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based upon “Prohibited Grounds;” and

WHEREAS, “Prohibited Grounds” are activities and identities protected under existing federal and state law, including, but not limited to, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sex, pregnancy, religion, National Guard or veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression; and

WHEREAS, the Commission was created because “North Carolina welcomes all people and recognizes the importance of diversity;” and

WHEREAS, since its inception, the Commission has met at the request of the Secretary of the DOA to address relevant policies and make recommendations to DOA and OSHR consistent with its charge; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is greatly concerned about recent actions by the University of North Carolina Board of Governors (BOG) to eliminate and defund programs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and

WHEREAS, President Joe Biden’s “Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workplace” (issued June 25, 2021) defines the term “*diversity*” as “the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities;” the term “*equity*” as “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment;” and “*inclusion*” as “the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds;” and

WHEREAS, DEI programs at North Carolina’s public universities have been shown to provide programming, resources, and spaces where students and employees feel welcome and included; and

WHEREAS, the elimination of such programs at North Carolina's public universities will affect the morale and well-being of thousands of students and employees negatively; and

WHEREAS, the elimination of such programs at North Carolina's public universities will negatively affect recruitment and retention of students, faculty, administrators, and staff.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE COMMISSION:

Recognizes the importance of the "the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities;" and

Believes adamantly in "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment;" and

Identifies with "inclusion" as "the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds."

FURTHER, THE COMMISSION:

Strongly condemns the elimination and defunding of DEI programs at the public universities in North Carolina; and

Urges the BOG to suspend this decision; and

Recommends that the BOG take public input from students and employees who have benefitted from DEI programs at the public universities in North Carolina to better understand their significance and importance.



**NC★DOA**  
Department of Administration