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March 16, 2026

Press Release: Human Rights Commission's Work Highlighted in House of Assembly

Hamilton, Bermuda — March 16, 2026

The work undertaken by the Human Rights Commission in 2025 was highlighted today in the House of Assembly during the Budget Debate. The Commission's priorities for the 2026–2027 fiscal year were shared, reaffirming its commitment to protecting and promoting human rights through education, advocacy and enforcement under the Human Rights Act 1981.

Executive Officer, Lisa Reed, stated, "The Human Rights Commission exists to make human rights a lived reality for everyone in Bermuda. The Commission serves to ensure individuals understand their rights, that institutions uphold their obligations, and that barriers to equality are effectively addressed wherever they arise."

Addressing Discrimination and Supporting Resolution

During the 2025 calendar year, the Commission received 215 complaints, a 20 percent increase from the previous year. Of those complaints:

- 77 percent were resolved within the year
- 23 percent remain active and ongoing

The majority of complaints related to discrimination in employment, followed by issues involving access to goods, services, and workplace harassment. Where appropriate, complainants are provided with referrals to assist them with engaging with other agencies as well as referrals for independent legal advice.

When complaints proceed to the investigation stage, parties are first offered the opportunity to participate in the Commission's Voluntary Mediation Program. Where parties agree to participate, the process brings both parties together with an independent mediator to seek a mutually agreed resolution.

In 2025, nine matters entered mediation, resulting in four successful resolutions, three unresolved matters and two that remained active at year's end. Where mediation does not resolve a complaint and it appears to have merit, the Executive Officer may refer the matter



to the Human Rights Tribunal for adjudication. The Human Rights Tribunal is an independent body responsible for adjudicating complaints under the Act.

Currently, thirteen cases are before the Tribunal, with projections suggesting this number may rise to twenty-three during the financial year, which may create a funding shortfall for panel member remuneration. In 2025, the Tribunal issued a decision on a preliminary matter that will proceed to a substantive hearing in 2026. Further information on Tribunal decisions is available at www.humanrights.bm.

Budget Overview

The Commission's proposed allocation for the 2026–2027 fiscal year is \$1,526,000, representing a 6 percent increase over the previous year's budget of \$1,434,000. The increase reflects adjustments associated with salary uplifts linked to cost-of-living changes and ongoing operational requirements.

The Commission continues to operate with seven full-time staff members, who support complaint investigations, mediation services, policy development, and public education initiatives.

Education, Outreach, and Community Engagement

During the past fiscal year, the Commission facilitated 71 educational and outreach engagements, including 26 formal presentations. These engagements included sessions with organizations such as:

- the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute
- Tomorrow's Voices
- Vision Bermuda
- the Bermuda Police Service

The Commission also participated in the Human Rights Education Network (HuRen) initiative, supporting efforts to strengthen human rights education among Bermuda's youth.

Executive Officer Lisa Reed also delivered remarks and keynote addresses on human rights and inclusion across the island, including events focused on ethical leadership, disability inclusion, and community engagement.

Advancing Disability Inclusion

A major focus of the Commission's work continues to be providing guidance on the implementation of the recommendations from the Disability Inclusion Report, published in July 2025 following extensive public consultation.

The report identified ongoing barriers faced by persons with disabilities in areas including education, employment, transportation, healthcare and access to public services.

The Commission has highlighted three priority areas for reform in Bermuda:

- Representation: ensuring persons with disabilities participate in decisions affecting their lives
- Compliance and accountability: strengthening enforcement of existing protections



- Development of a National Disability Strategy to guide coordinated action across sectors

“Bermuda has clear obligations to ensure accessibility and inclusion,” Ms. Reed said. “Our focus is on translating those commitments into meaningful change so that persons with disabilities can participate fully in every aspect of society.”

International Leadership and Collaboration

The Commission continues to play a leadership role in international human rights discussions.

In October, the Executive Officer attended the Caribbean Disability Network Conference in Barbados, where the Commission presented key findings from Bermuda’s Disability Inclusion Report and shared insights on the operation of Bermuda’s human rights framework.

The Commission will also host a regional fact-finding delegation the summer of 2026, led by Barbados Human Rights Commissioner Kerryann Ifill, further strengthening collaboration between national human rights institutions in the Caribbean.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, the Commission will develop a Strategic Plan for 2026–2028, which will guide its work in strengthening governance, expanding education and outreach efforts and advancing key policy initiatives.

A public consultation on age discrimination and ageism, launched earlier this year, will also inform recommendations aimed at addressing legislative gaps in the Human Rights Act related to age protections in employment.

“Human rights protections must be reflected in legislation and in the daily experiences of people across our island,” Lisa Reed concluded, “Our work continues to focus on building awareness, strengthening accountability and ensuring that fairness and dignity guide our shared future.”

~ENDS~

The Human Rights Commission has a statutory remit to protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act, 1981. As the National Human Rights Institution for Bermuda, their mission is to protect and promote human rights through education, advocacy, collaboration and enforcement.

Find out more by phone 441 295-5859, email info@humanrights.bm, website www.humanrights.bm, and social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram.