



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Employment Litigation Section – 4CON
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530
www.usdoj.gov/crt/emp

June 4, 2025

Via U.S. and Electronic Mail

The Honorable Peter Neronha
Attorney General of Rhode Island
150 South Main Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
Email: pfneronha@riag.ri.gov

Re: Investigation of the Employment Practices of the Rhode Island State Government,
Pursuant to Section 707 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Amended

Dear Attorney General Neronha:

We are writing to inform you that the Department of Justice is opening an investigation to determine whether the State of Rhode Island (“Rhode Island”) is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination based on race or any other protected characteristic in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e, *et seq.* (“Title VII”). It is the responsibility of the Attorney General of the United States to enforce the provisions of Title VII with respect to state and local government employers. The Attorney General has delegated the authority to investigate compliance with these provisions to the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division.

Title VII prohibits an employer from discriminating against an individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2. When the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a state or local government employer is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination in violation of Title VII, it is the Attorney General’s responsibility to take appropriate action to eliminate that violation, including presenting the matter to the appropriate court for civil proceedings. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-6(a).

Our investigation is based on information that Rhode Island may be engaged in employment practices regarding its affirmative action program governing state government employment under state law¹ that discriminate based on race, national origin, or other protected characteristics in violation of Title VII. Accordingly, the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division has authorized a full investigation to determine whether Rhode Island is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination as set forth above.

¹ Rhode Island General Law, §28-5.1-3(b) (“Each state department or agency, excluding the legislative branch of state government, shall annually prepare an affirmative action plan.”); *see also* Guidelines for State of Rhode Island Government Affirmative Action Plans, <https://perma.cc/2JGS-6BUQ> (describing implementation of the plan).

It is important to note that we have not reached any conclusions about the subject matter of the investigation. We intend to consider all relevant information, and we welcome your assistance in helping to identify what that might be. We would appreciate your cooperation in our investigation.

I have assigned Employment Litigation Section Senior Trial Attorney Louis Whitsett to this investigation. Mr. Whitsett will be in contact with you shortly to set up a mutually agreeable date and time to discuss the parameters of this investigation, including the scope of information that we will be seeking from you. Mr. Whitsett may be reached by phone at 202-305-5828 or at louis.whitsett@usdoj.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Harmeet Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

By: /s/ Eric Sell
Eric A. Sell
Acting Chief
Employment Litigation Section

cc: Kevin L. Hubbard
Civil Chief
Office of the United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island