



APPROVED JUL 15 2026

Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

Nina Harris, Chairperson

Alexandria Wilson, Executive Director

115 South La Salle Street, Suite 4N Chicago, IL 60603

State of Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

CEI Monthly Meeting of the Commission

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: Jesse White State of Illinois Building, 115 S LaSalle Street, 4th Floor Lincoln Park Conference Room, Chicago IL 60603

Location: Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. 2nd Street, Ste. 502, Springfield IL 62704

Virtual Location: WebEx

MINUTES

○ **Call to Order**

- Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.
- In accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1 et seq., the Commission provided telephonic and video access to the meeting so that members of the public can monitor the meeting and has updated its website to keep the public fully apprised of the Commission activities relating to virtual participation.
- Parliamentarian Serene Smith conducted the roll call of the commissioners.
 - All commissioners were present virtually, as the meeting was held in an informational format due to inclement weather.

○ **Commissioners in Attendance:**

- i. Commissioner Richard Costes
- ii. Commissioner Ennedy Rivera
- iii. Commissioner Van Austin
- iv. Commissioner Bruce Montgomery
- v. Commissioner Nina Harris
- vi. Commissioner Ovelia Smith-Barton
- vii. Commissioner Benjamin Salentine

○ **Minutes: (May 20, 2026)**

- Pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, a quorum was not physically present at the designated meeting location; therefore, no motions, votes, or other final actions were taken. Any action items were deferred until the next regular meeting in compliance with the Act (5 ILCS 120/2.01 and 5 ILCS 120/7(a) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act).



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- **Spotlight:** Dan Seals – President and CEO, Chicago Minority Development Council (CMSDC)
 - Dan Seals, President and CEO, Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC) provided a high-level overview of the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC), including its history and origins. He explained that CMSDC was the first non-governmental organization to provide minority business enterprise certification. Mr. Seals discussed the Council's longstanding commitment to supporting minority-owned businesses and presented data-driven information highlighting the challenges these businesses continue to face. The data demonstrated persistent barriers to success, including limited access to capital, restricted growth opportunities, and challenges in scaling minority-owned businesses. The information also reflected racial inequities that continue to impede the growth and sustainability of many minority enterprises.
 - Mr. Seals shared metrics regarding the number of businesses assisted by the Council and outlined the organization's four core pillars: Certify, Develop, Connect, and Advocate. He further discussed the Council's community outreach efforts, strategic partnerships, and programs designed to support minority business development. Lastly, Mr. Seals highlighted the Council for Growth program, which provides minority business owners with access to legal professionals for guidance and support related to starting, operating, and maintaining their businesses.
- **Operations Reports**
 - **Outreach Report-** Nikita Richards, Internal/External Communications & Legislative Affairs Officer
 - i. Nikita Richards, reported that through CEI's partnership with the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, certification resources are now available at select Secretary of State Business Service Centers, expanding access to BEP and VBP certification information for businesses statewide.
 - ii. The Outreach Unit also launched the *Five Steps: How to Register with the State of Illinois BEP & VBP* guide, a simplified resource designed to help vendors navigate the certification process. Feedback from business owners has been very positive.
 - iii. **Certify & Thrive Campaign Update:** In May, staff completed 245 outreach calls. The Compliance Unit led all teams in calls completed both for the month and year-to-date. Campaign data is currently being reviewed, with a final report anticipated in July.



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- iv. **Outreach Activities:** CEI participated in several outreach, training, and business engagement events throughout May and June, including partnerships with the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Tollway, Governors State University, and the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council.
 - v. **Ongoing Business:** The Outreach Unit has developed the Certification Kickstart Initiative to strengthen vendor engagement and increase certification outcomes.
 - vi. **Recently Closed Business:** The Certify & Thrive 2026 Campaign has concluded. CEI also participated in several presentations and training events with universities, procurement, and business stakeholders.
- **Administrative Report – Robin Streets, Chief of Staff**
 - i. Chief of Staff, Streets reported that CEI leadership is collaborating with Commissioners on several major initiatives, including development of a BEP/VBP training academy and a new disparity study examining the impact of discrimination on minority and women-owned businesses in Illinois.
 - ii. He also provided staffing updates, noting ongoing recruitment efforts and the recent hiring of a Front Office Associate and Administrative Coordinator. CEI entered into an intergovernmental agreement with UIC to conduct a Financial Institutions Disparity Study, published FAQs for Notice 2026.3, launched the Mentor-Protégé webpage, and received the Annual Supplier Diversity Report from telecommunications providers.
 - **Financial and Human Capital Report -Tracey Kenney, Chief of Finance and Human Capital Officer**
 - i. Chief of Finance, Kenney reported that the Illinois General Assembly approved CEI's Fiscal Year 2027 budget in the amount of \$5.6 million.
 - ii. She also provided a staffing update, noting that CEI currently has 40 employees, including 7 Commissioners, and continues recruitment efforts to fill vacant positions. The Executive I – Business Data Analyst posting recently closed and is under review.



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- **Business Enterprise program (BEP) Compliance Unit and Veterans Business Program (VBP) Reports – Jacob Perez, Deputy Director**
 - i. The Compliance Unit reported that it is developing new U-plans, goal-setting forms, and waiver request forms to support local municipalities receiving grant funds.
 - ii. The Compliance Subcommittee will reconvene on July 21 to continue its review of FY26 Compliance Plans and class exemptions. The Compliance Unit is also finalizing updates to the goal-setting process, including a revised manual and training video for agencies.
- **Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Certification Unit and Mentor Protégé Program (MPP) Reports – LaTasha Binder, Deputy Director**
 - i. The Certification Unit reported that it is focused on processing and renewing expiring BEP certifications, conducting a year-end review of operations, and identifying improvements for Fiscal Year 2027.
 - ii. As the Certify & Thrive campaign concludes, the Unit continues collaborating with Outreach, hosting weekly virtual office hours in English and Spanish, and maintaining partnerships with State agencies. The average certification application processing time remains approximately 46 days, which is below the statutory timeframe.
 - iii. The Mentor-Protégé Program continues its implementation phase, with staff reviewing mentor applications and conducting assessments in preparation for the July 1, 2026, launch. As of June 1, 2026, the program received 142 interest forms, including 23 prospective mentors and 114 prospective protégés.
- **Ongoing Business**
 - **Illinois Hiring Practices (30ILCS 574/40-10(4))- Commissioner Ennedy Rivera**
 - i. Commissioner Ennedy Rivera reported that this month's diversity in State hiring efforts focused on outreach and mentorship. She participated as a panelist at the Alumni Association's Cafecito event, the DePaul Latino Law Student Association Forum, and the Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees Directors' Roundtable.



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- ii. These engagements provided opportunities to discuss public service, leadership, and pathways into State employment while encouraging future leaders to consider careers in government.
- **Waivers and Exemption Report – Commissioner Richard Costes**
 - i. Commissioner Richard Costes reported that the FY25 Extensions and Waivers Report has been published on the CEI website. He thanked the Chief Procurement Officers for providing the data, Commissioner Montgomery for laying the foundation for the report, and Executive Director Wilson for her support and feedback.
- **Race Gender Wage Report – Commissioner Richard Costes**
 - i. Commissioner Richard Costes shared that CEI has published the FY25 Race and Gender Wage Report, which examines pay equity and workforce representation across State agencies and public institutions of higher education.
 - ii. He thanked Commissioners Salentine and Smith-Barton, Chair Harris, Executive Director Wilson, the Governor's Office, and all participating agencies and institutions for their contributions to this report.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Updates**
 - i. No updates
- **Public Comment**
 - i. None
- **Adjournment**
 - i. Chair Harris adjourned the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

