



The City of New York
BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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Immigration Committee Minutes

September 20th, 2024

Mohammed Sheikh, Committee Chairperson

Attendance: Mohammed Sheikh, Argelia Ortiz, Issa Boubacar

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Introduction and Meeting Purpose

- Committee Chair Mohammed Sheikh introduces himself as the chair of the immigration committee for Bronx Community Board #1 in New York City.
- Committee Chair Mohammed Sheikh thanks the board members and introduces the special guest, Ms. Samelys Lopez, from the New York City Commission on Human Rights.
- Ms. Samelys Lopez introduces herself as an associate human rights specialist at the Commission of Human Rights.

Overview of the Commission on Human Rights

- Ms. Samelys Lopez explains the mission of the Commission on Human Rights, which is to enforce the New York City Human Rights Law.
- The presentation is designed to provide a broad overview of the Commission and its laws, not the exact letter of the law.
- Ms. Samelys Lopez acknowledges the Native American Lenape people and their historical presence on the land.
- The agenda includes an overview of the Commission's structure, protections against discrimination, and the process for filing a human rights complaint.

Commission on Human Rights Structure

- Ms. Samelys Lopez describes the four main divisions of the Commission: Community Relations Bureau, Legal Enforcement Bureau, Office of the Chair, and Law Enforcement Bureau.

- The Community Relations Bureau engages with the community, educates the public, and takes a proactive role in informing people about their rights.
- The Legal Enforcement Bureau determines if a complaint meets the threshold of the New York City Human Rights Law.
- The Office of the Chair issues final orders, decisions, and offers legal enforcement guidance, and drafts policy and legislation.

Community Engagement and Reporting Discrimination

- Ms. Samelys Lopez explains the importance of language access and the availability of presentations in multiple languages.
- The Commission has five community centers throughout the five boroughs, including one in the Bronx.
- Reporting discrimination can be done by calling the hotline, writing a complaint online, or visiting a community service center.
- The Commission has advisors who specialize in various areas, including the LGBTQIA community, reentry, and housing.

Protected Classes and Discrimination Categories

- Ms. Samelys Lopez lists the protected classes under the New York City Human Rights Law, including age, immigration status, national origin, color, disability, gender, gender identity, height, weight, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, and source of income.
- Discrimination based on hair texture is highlighted as a significant issue, especially for people of color.
- The Commission sees a high number of complaints related to disability and source of income discrimination.
- The transgender community is identified as one of the most vulnerable communities facing discrimination.

Employment and Housing Protections

- Ms. Samelys Lopez discusses protections in employment, including the prohibition of discrimination based on lawful occupation, pregnancy, and religious observances.
- Reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees, such as providing a chair to sit, are explained.
- Protections in housing include the prohibition of discrimination based on lawful source of income, such as Section 8 vouchers.

- The importance of knowing the type of housing one lives in is emphasized, as rent stabilized tenants have more rights.

Public Accommodations and Discriminatory Harassment

- Ms. Samelys Lopez explains that public accommodations, such as stores, supermarkets, and restaurants, must not discriminate.
- Discriminatory harassment, including threats, verbal harassment, use of force, and cyberbullying, is prohibited.
- Bias-based profiling by law enforcement is illegal, and law enforcement officers cannot violate the human rights law.
- The Commission does not collaborate with ICE and does not divulge immigration status to authorities.

Immigration and Human Rights

- Ms. Samelys Lopez clarifies that immigrants, including undocumented individuals, are protected under the New York City Human Rights Law.
- Discrimination based on national origin, such as prejudice between Dominicans and Haitians, is highlighted.
- The importance of reporting discrimination, even if the perpetrator threatens to call ICE, is emphasized.
- The Commission does not aid with citizenship or naturalization but can enforce protections for immigrant communities.

Resources and Final Remarks

- Ms. Samelys Lopez mentions the Bronx Immigration Partnership, a coalition of Bronx-based immigration organizations that provide policy updates and resources.
- The Commission's hotline and website are provided as resources for reporting discrimination.
- The importance of sharing this information with the community is stressed, especially for undocumented individuals who may feel fearful.
- The meeting concludes with a thank you to the participants and an invitation to report back to the full board meeting.

Action Items

Submit feedback on community needs to Steven Palmers by October 29th for the community district needs assessment.

Schedule Ms. Samelys Lopez to present to the full board meeting on the information shared at the immigration committee meeting.

Connect with Ms. Samelys Lopez over email regarding the Bronx Immigration Partnership meetings.