KEVIN KISH, DIRECTOR



Civil Rights Department Commission on the State of Hate

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Minutes

Commission on the State of Hate Community Forum

May 22, 2025, 3:00 pm

Commissioners Present

Chair Brian Levin
Vice Chair Andrea Beth Damsky
Commissioner Regina Cuellar
Commissioner Cece Feiler
Commissioner Russell Roybal
Commissioner Bamby Salcedo
Commissioner Erroll Southers

Civil Rights Department (CRD) Staff Present

Rishi Khalsa, Deputy Director of Communications
Marquez Equalibria, Assistant Deputy Director
Alec Watts, Assistant Deputy Director
Rebecca Goodsell, Research Data Specialist
David Kalkstein, Research Data Specialist
Kevin Thomas, Research Data Specialist
Monica Chavez, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Shilpa Ram, Assistant General Counsel
Gregory Mann, Senior Attorney Mediator
Kendra Tanacea, Attorney Mediator

Others Present

An estimated 54 members of the public attended virtually.

I. Welcome

Commissioner Cuellar welcomed everyone to the Commission on the State of Hate's first community forum of 2025. She reviewed the process for closed captioning, announced that Spanish interpretation was available for the meeting, shared the goals of the Commission's community forums, and introduced the rest of the Commissioners. She also reviewed resources available to the

public, including the CA vs. Hate Hotline, the Community Conflict Resolution Unit services, and additional resources for immigrants.

Commissioner Cuellar introduced the topic of the forum: Community-Based Organizations' Responses to Anti-Immigrant Hate. She shared information about immigrant populations in California. She also noted that ING would no longer present.

Links Shared in the Chat:

https://www.CAvsHate.org

https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/community-conflict-resolution-unit/

https://oag.ca.gov/immigrant#resources

https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/Posters/

II. Informational Presentations on the Topic: "Hate Against Immigrant Communities: Resources and Solutions from Community-Based Organizations"

A. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

Commissioner Cuellar introduced Emily Romero, Program Coordinator at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights.

Emily Romero presented the following information:

- CHIRLA's mission is to support an inclusive community for immigrants by providing resources for immigrants to live dignified and safe lives.
- CHIRLA has been involved in anti-hate work since its inception in 1999 following the murder of Joseph Ileto, a Filipino postal worker, by a white supremacist.
- Their current anti-hate work focuses on community outreach, breaking down the stigma and normalization of hate acts within the immigrant community, and encouraging reporting and seeking support despite fears related to immigration status or distrust of institutions.
- CHIRLA conducts extensive direct community outreach, meeting people in various settings including local consulates, schools, and public events to provide anti-hate resources and information.
- Educational materials are distributed in multiple languages and include information on the definition of hate incidents and crimes, how to report hate, and mental health resources.
- The organization operates an Immigrant Assistance Hotline for questions on immigration law, workers' rights, law enforcement engagement, public benefits, and civic engagement.
- CHIRLA partners with various organizations and engages with commissions like the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to promote culturally-sensitive hate crime responses by law enforcement.

B. Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA)

Commissioner Cuellar thanked Emily Romero and introduced Annie Lee, the Managing Director of Policy at Chinese for Affirmative Action.

BRIAN LEVIN ANDREA BETH DAMSKY CYNTHIA CHOI REGINA CUELLAR CECE FEILER RUSSELL ROYBAL BAMBY SALCEDO ERROLL SOUTHERS COMMISSIONER CHAIR VICE CHAIR COMMISSIONER COMMISSIONER COMMISSIONER COMMISSIONER COMMISSIONER

Annie Lee presented the following information:

- The significant impact of anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric on Asian American communities.
- Two-thirds of Asians and multiracial Asians in California are foreign-born, and nearly one in five undocumented Californians are Asian.
- Specific Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) groups disproportionately affected by immigration policies include: 1.5 generation Asian Americans who have a history of criminal legal system involvement, international students, and H-1B visa holders.
- There is a correlation between political rhetoric and surges in anti-Asian hate.
- About half of AAPI adults in California experienced hate in 2024 due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality, according to a representative survey.
- CAA provides direct services including naturalization assistance, legal referrals, information to community members, a rapid response hotline, and also collaborates with other immigrant rights organizations in San Francisco.
- CAA provides immigrant rights trainings.
- CAA engages in policy and advocacy work, as well as community-building, to combat antiimmigrant and anti-AAPI hate.
- Community members are encouraged to report hate to California vs. Hate and Stop AAPI Hate, engage in campaigns, and prioritize mental health in the face of ongoing discrimination and hate.

C. Fresno Immigrant and Refugee Ministries (FIRM)

Commissioner Cuellar thanked Annie Lee and introduced Christine Barker-Dominguez, the Executive Director of the Fresno Immigrant and Refugee Ministries.

Christine Barker-Dominguez presented the following information:

- FIRM has more than 30 years of experience serving diverse immigrant and refugee communities in Fresno and throughout the Central Valley.
- FIRM provides direct services, including community health work and a Family Welcome Center to serve as a "one-stop shop" for new immigrants.
- Current challenges faced by refugee and immigrant communities include: family separation due to policy changes; the uncertainty of temporary status; and concerns about belonging and possible deportation.
- FIRM actively combats these challenges through radio shows and videos in a variety of languages. They also hold community events that celebrate cultural diversity and foster a sense of belonging.
- She provided recommendations to the State, including to maintain funding for "trusted messengers" and to provide assistance in appropriate languages.
- She expressed concern that proposed state budget cuts to services such as Medicare could mirror federal cuts to food and healthcare access for refugees and other documented immigrants.

Commissioner Cuellar thanked Christine Baker-Dominguez and all the presenters.

Commissioner Feiler reminded everyone of the public comment guidance and process.

Public Comment

One public commenter shared data about Californians' experiences with hate.

Another commenter inquired whether online hate complaints received by Annie Lee's organization were primarily generalized insults or individualized attacks.

Annie Lee confirmed a mix of types of online hate, emphasizing that even general online hate impacts real-life interactions.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Roybal thanked the presenters and asked how California vs. Hate, the Civil Rights Department, and the Commission could further support organizations working to aid immigrants in California.

Christine Barker stressed the importance of continued provision of high-quality educational materials from state agencies translated into appropriate languages.

Emily Romero suggested the Civil Rights Department take a more active role in filling gaps left by federal services, promote California vs. Hate in underserved regions, and expand networks with local partners.

Annie Lee commented that California vs. Hate is a trusted partner and encouraged people to rely on their local and state resources. She expressed that cuts to funding may impact communities' trust in government.

Commissioner Salcedo thanked the presenters and asked about current advocacy and accountability efforts regarding investments to eliminate hate, especially efforts impacting immigrant communities in California.

Emily Romero emphasized the importance of holding elected officials and law enforcement agencies accountable.

Annie Lee identified three main defenses against top-down hate rhetoric and policies: the courts, strong state governments, and civil society.

Christine Barker-Dominguez added that there is a need to tell positive stories affirming that everyone belongs in California.

Chair Levin highlighted the intersection of anti-immigrant and racist motivations in hate crimes and asked Annie Lee about the application of the Alien Enemies Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

Annie Lee responded that both the Alien Enemies Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 are being inappropriately used to deny due process and stretch legal definitions. Chair Levin agreed with Annie Lee, noting the precedent set by cases like United States v. Wong Kim Ark in confirming the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment.

III. **Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

One commenter emphasized the importance of undocumented individuals like himself sharing their stories.

Another commenter offered to share the report findings from his master's capstone project on California's anti-hate infrastructure.

The next commenter shared that the LA County Commission on Human Relations accepts reports of hate crimes and incidents and has recently released its first annual hate incident report.

Chair Levin congratulated Grace Löwenberg who is retiring from the LA County Commission on Human Relations.

IV. Adjournment of the Meeting

Commissioner Roybal thanked the presenters, Commissioners Cuellar and Feiler, and CRD staff for their work on the forum and expressed gratitude for addressing the topic.

Commissioner Cuellar thanked all the presenters and CRD staff and reminded attendees to report hate incidents to California vs. Hate.

The forum adjourned at 4:47 pm.

Links Sent in the Chat:

https://oag.ca.gov/immigrant#resources https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/Posters/