



Civil Rights Department Commission on the State of Hate

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Minutes

Commission on the State of Hate Meeting

June 24, 2026, 9:00 am

Commissioners Present

- Chair Brian Levin
- Vice Chair Cynthia Choi
- Commissioner Regina Cuellar
- Commissioner Andrea Beth Damsky
- Commissioner Russell Roybal
- Commissioner Erroll G. Southers

Civil Rights Department (CRD) Staff Present

- Kevin Kish, Director
- Julia Parish, Deputy Director
- Alec Watts, Assistant Deputy Director
- Rebecca Goodsell, Research Data Specialist
- Adrian Bacong, Research Data Specialist
- Kevin Thomas, Research Data Specialist
- Zelene Molina, Staff Services Manager
- Shilpa Ram, Assistant General Counsel

Others Present

An estimated 19 members of the public attended virtually.

I. Welcome

- A. Call to Order
- B. Establishment of a Quorum
- C. Review of the Agenda

Chair Levin welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained the closed captioning process. After confirming a quorum through roll call, Chair Levin reviewed the meeting's agenda and outlined the procedure for public comment. There were no public comments on this agenda item.

II. Informational Presentation: Hate Against the LGBTQ+ Community

Nathan Cisneros, HIV Criminalization Project Director, Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law

Chair Levin welcomed and introduced Nathan Cisneros, who shared findings from a series of reports that were conducted by the Williams Institute at UCLA.

Summary of Presentation

- Mr. Cisneros' presentation covered themes of gender identity, victimization, gender minorities, and hate crimes in California. He shared the following findings:

- Research shows that gender minorities have more interactions with law enforcement and experience high rates of victimization compared to the general population, but are often reluctant to report to police due to fear of discriminatory treatment.
- Gender minorities are more likely to be victims of violent hate crimes when compared to people who are not gender minorities. Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey show that gender minorities experience higher victimization compared to their cisgender or straight counterparts. The 2022 U.S. Trans Survey shows that about 60% of Californian respondents experienced various forms of violence or harassment and two-thirds of respondents shared that their gender identity or expression was a motivating factor for a physical attack.
- Anti-trans hate crimes are on the rise and can occur to people of all gender expressions and identities.
- He commented that the biggest data gap arises from gender minorities' reluctance to interact with police.. He also commented on the need for increased access to police report narratives to understand the circumstances behind hate crimes and victimization.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Damsky asked about the safety of transgender people who report incidents to agencies such as the FBI, given the federal administration's hostility towards this community.
 - Mr. Cisneros responded that federal agencies such as the FBI and the Department of Justice are no longer collecting data on gender identity for the National Crime Victimization Survey and hate crime data because of the current administration's executive order.
- Commissioner Southers asked if there were any other states or agencies across the country who are educating their communities or who are implementing policies and procedures that are supporting communities who may be reluctant to engage with law enforcement.
 - Mr. Cisneros responded that the reluctance to engage with law enforcement is consistent across the nation, but the Williams Institute has not explored this in depth as their focus has been California.
- Commissioner Choi asked about community-based responses to hate incidents and hate crimes and how to support community members who have been harmed.
 - Mr. Cisneros shared that gender minority communities desire community-based responses that do not include police for safety due to the historical mistrust of law enforcement. He also shared that the Williams Institute conducted a needs assessment of the trans and non-binary community in Los Angeles County to understand how this community views public safety, reporting, and to identify community-based solutions.
- Chair Levin asked three questions. The first question was clarification on whether the number of incidents (around 100) reported in Los Angeles County included criminal and non-criminal incidents. The second question was whether there was a relationship between the increase of transgender victimization and the amount of funds spent on anti-trans political ads or anti-trans related legislation. The third question was a clarifying question on the decrease of hate incidents in San Francisco County.
 - Mr. Cisneros' response to the first question was that the data came from the County of Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations hate crime count, which are reported hate crimes.. He stated that there is a gap between hate crimes reported to the Los Angeles

- County Commission on Human Relations from law enforcement agencies versus what is reported to the State of California. He is unsure why more hate crimes are reported to the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations versus the State of California.
- Mr. Cisneros responded to the other questions by stating that rhetoric and policies may be what is influencing the increase in victimization in California and in the country. Also, the data per county represents proportions and not underlying numbers of hate crimes.
 - Commissioner Cuellar extended an invitation for a potential partnership for a future community forum. She also asked if the Williams Institute has any data on the Two Spirit community.
 - Mr. Cisneros stated that administrative data record systems do not provide that option. He shared that there is a project currently underway, which is a partnership with the Two-Spirit Center & Native LGBTQ+ Center for Equity and the Williams Institute, to review how gender identity is represented in tribal codes in California.
 - CRD Research Data Specialist Dr. Kevin Thomas asked how intersectionality of gender identity with race and immigration status may impact the data.
 - Ms. Cisneros shared that racial and ethnic minorities who also identify as gender minorities, are more likely to be victims of crime. In California, there are data limitations and there is a need for qualitative data, such as narratives. The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations has gathered qualitative data and featured it in their reports.
 - Commissioner Damsky asked if the data presented is differentiated between trans men and trans women and if there has been a focus on people who are non-binary.
 - Mr. Cisneros responded that the California Department of Justice hate crime data available to the public does not provide demographic information about the victim. However, the Los Angeles County hate crime data did include demographic data on victims, which shows that overwhelmingly, trans women are the victims of hate crimes relative to other gender minority groups. He also stated that since 2013, the Department of Justice hate crime data disaggregates anti-transgender hate crime data from anti-gender non-conforming hate crime data.

Public Comment on Presentation

- One member of the public provided a comment on law enforcement training on hate crimes and asked if there was a need to improve police reporting protocols related to hate crimes.
 - Mr. Cisneros responded that there is a need for law enforcement reporting to be consistent and a need to know how each law enforcement agency is making their determination on what constitutes a hate crime.

III. Discussion and Action regarding the 2025-2026 Annual Report of the Commission

Assistant Deputy Director Alec Watts provided an update on the annual report. He thanked the Commissioners for their feedback and shared that changes were made to the report based on the feedback.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Damsky expressed appreciation for the changes and suggested some additional revisions to the second draft.

There were no public comments on this item.

Action by the Commission

Motion: Commissioner Southers moved to approve the report delegating non-substantive changes to the Chair and staff and incorporating Commissioner Damsky's feedback. Commissioner Roybal seconded.

Ayes: 6 (Chair Levin, Vice Chair Choi, Commissioner Cuellar, Commissioner Damsky, Commissioner Roybal, Commissioner Southers)

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

IV. Chair and Subcommittee Updates

A. Subcommittee on Patterns, Trends, and Prevention

There was no report from this subcommittee.

B. Subcommittee on Resources, Support, and Response

There was no report from this subcommittee.

C. Subcommittee on Community Forums

- Commissioner Cuellar provided an update on the community forum that was hosted in San Francisco on May 11th. She shared that attendees were engaged and provided information for the Commission to consider.
- Commissioner Cuellar also provided an update on upcoming forums and shared that the next forum will be focused on antisemitism and looked forward to discussing this further during the agenda item on speakers on antisemitism.
- Vice Chair Choi thanked the subcommittee for their efforts and recommended that there be future forums on other faiths given that there have been so many faith-based forms of discrimination.
- Commissioner Roybal thanked Vice Chair Choi and welcomed the recommendation. He highlighted that the subcommittee is working on scheduling forums far in advance.

D. Chair Brian Levin

- Chair Levin thanked the Commissioners and CRD staff for their work on the annual report.
- He also highlighted the importance of engaging with communities to measure, map, and respond to hate, and provided some brief statistics on trends.

There was no Commission discussion nor public comments on this item.

V. Approval of the Minutes: May 11, 2026, Community Forum

No Commissioner comments or public comments on this item.

Action by the Commission

Motion: Commissioner Damsky moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Southers seconded.

Ayes: 6 (Chair Levin, Vice Chair Choi, Commissioner Cuellar, Commissioner Damsky, Commissioner Roybal, and Commissioner Southers)

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

VI. Discussion on Speakers on Antisemitism at Future Commission Events

Commission Discussion

- Chair Levin opened the discussion by thanking Commissioner Damsky and sharing some statistics and stories on anti-Jewish hate crimes. Chair Levin stated that a community forum featuring experts and community members is a method to interrupt antisemitism.
- Commissioner Damsky provided suggestions on the approach to take to address the topic of antisemitism. Her suggestions included potential topics and recommended speakers who could serve as an expert on each of the topics.
 - Commissioner Roybal thanked Commissioner Damsky for her recommendations and shared that the Community Forum subcommittee would include them in their planning.
- Vice Chair Choi commented on the importance of discussing diversity within different communities and discussing the barriers communities face. She also expressed appreciation for the advanced planning of forums and the opportunity to share ideas during Commission meetings.
 - Commissioner Roybal elaborated on Vice Chair Choi's comments and shared that the advanced planning of forums gives Commissioners the opportunity to be involved in the planning by having conversations during Commission meetings.
- Chair Levin asked where the forum on antisemitism would take place.
 - Commissioner Roybal stated that the subcommittee discussed where this forum should be hosted. Hosting it virtually would give the Commission more flexibility and would have a wider reach. He also shared that if it was decided to host in-person, preference would be given to a geographic area that typically doesn't host state government meetings.
 - Commissioner Damsky shared her support for hosting the forum virtually.
- Chair Levin recommended speakers for the upcoming forum on antisemitism.
- Commissioner Roybal thanked members of the public who provided a list of recommended speakers and noted that their recommendations would also be part of the planning discussions.

Public Comment

- Two members of the public provided comments expressing gratitude to the Commission for the focus on antisemitism and describing their personal experiences with antisemitism.

VII. Discussion of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Chair Levin shared that a federal judge in California issued a nationwide ruling banning arrests at immigration courts.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Damsky made comments on the harm and effects that these arrests have on people who are experiencing it and is glad to learn that there may be some legal recourse.

There were no public comments on this item.

VIII. Commission Member Announcements

- Commissioner Damsky shared that she will be seeking reappointment to the Commission.

There was no Commission discussion nor public comments on this item.

IX. Future Agenda Items

- Commissioner Damsky asked for an update on the exploration of youth involvement in the Commission.
 - Alec Watts shared that the Community Forums subcommittee will be working on this.

There were no public comments on this item.

X. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

The Commission may not discuss or act on any matter raised during the public comment section that is not included on this agenda, except whether to decide to place the matter on the agenda of a future meeting.

There was no Commission discussion nor public comments on this item.

XI. Adjournment of the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30am.