

**PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY**

INTRODUCTION

Good Afternoon, President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Randy Duque, Acting Executive Director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR). I am pleased to provide testimony on the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relation’s Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR) is the City’s official civil rights agency. PCHR enforces local anti-discrimination laws, investigates discrimination complaints and civil rights violations, resolves community disputes through various conflict intervention methods, and educates the public on its legal rights and responsibilities.

The PCHR also staffs the Fair Housing Commission, which is charged with remedying unfair rental practices and addressing unsafe and unhealthy conditions in rental properties through enforcement of the Fair Housing Ordinance and in pursuit of the Mayor’s goal of increasing access to housing to ensure vibrant and equitable communities.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2026: The PCHR will continue to focus on eliminating housing appraisal discrimination through its enforcement efforts and will develop outreach programs to educate homeowners about the housing appraisal process and homeowner rights. PCHR will also develop a “testing program” to root out bias at the household level. In addition, PCHR will expand the scope of its Compliance Mediation Program beyond those who have experienced employment discrimination, to include parties alleging housing and public accommodation discrimination. Finally, the PCHR will hold programs to promote strong community relations, including an interfaith forum and the continuation of the Youth Ambassador Program – an initiative started in FY24 to train young people in civil rights, conflict resolution, and standing up to hate so that they may create effective peer messages based on those themes.

PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Actual Obligations	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Estimated Obligations	FY26 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY26 Proposed-FY25 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$2,646,469	\$2,436,529	\$2,663,744	\$2,815,027	\$2,825,926	\$10,899
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$71,901	\$69,348	\$66,901	\$66,901	\$66,901	\$0
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$38,031	\$34,483	\$28,031	\$28,031	\$28,031	\$0
	\$2,756,401	\$2,540,360	\$2,758,676	\$2,909,959	\$2,920,858	\$10,899

The Department has no contracts.

Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals \$2,920,858, an increase of \$10,899 over Fiscal Year 2025 estimated obligation levels. This increase is primarily due to wage increase adjustments for the exempt, non-represented employees, and members of DC 33 and 47.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$2,825,926 in Class 100, a \$10,899 increase over FY25. This funding will support compensation of staff, commissioners, and lump sums for retirees.
- \$66,901 in Class 200, level with FY25. This funding will fund interpretation services for clients and court reporting, as well as training for staff.
- \$28,031 in Class 300/400, level with FY25. This funding will be used for the printing of educational materials for clients and for advertising and promotional materials.

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STAFFING LEVELS

The Department is requesting 35 budgeted positions for FY26, level with FY25.

Employment Levels (as of November 2024)			
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2024	FY26 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	35	34	35
Number of Exempt Positions	3	3	3
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		3	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$75,565	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$78,279	

NEW HIRES

N/A

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PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:

Program Name: Human Relations

Program Number: 54

FY26 Proposed General Fund: \$2,825,926

Program Description:

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR) is the City's official civil rights and peacemaking agency. PCHR enforces local anti-discrimination laws, investigates discrimination complaints and civil rights violations, resolves community disputes through various conflict intervention methods, and educates the public on its legal rights and responsibilities. PCHR also staffs the Fair Housing Commission (FHC), which is charged with remedying unfair rental practices and addressing unsafe and unhealthy conditions in rental properties through enforcement of the Fair Housing Ordinance and in pursuit of the Mayor's goal of increasing access to housing to ensure vibrant and equitable communities.

The Compliance Division enforces laws that prohibit discrimination and promotes equality by conducting thorough investigations and recommending findings. If an investigation results in a finding of probable cause, the Commission will hold a public hearing and issue an order aimed at remedying the discrimination. The Compliance Division also operates a Discrimination Mediation Program, which resolves discrimination cases efficiently by drawing upon support from volunteer lawyers who have been trained in mediation.

The Community Relations Division provides conflict resolution and mediation services to resolve neighbor disputes and works to engage people of different backgrounds to promote intergroup harmony. This unit also conducts skills-building workshops and serves as the general educational arm of the agency. It also facilitates a Dispute Resolution Program, which responds to requests to help quell neighbor disputes and other volatile situations that have not yet escalated to violence and that are not being litigated.

The Fair Housing Commission (FHC) enforces the Fair Housing Ordinance, which addresses unfair rental practices in housing, particularly when a property has been cited for code violations. Each year, hundreds of tenants file complaints with the FHC seeking redress after their landlords engage in unfair rental practices such as terminating a lease when a property is cited for code violations or retaliating against tenants for exercising their legal rights.

FY26 Strategic Goals:

- PCHR will continue to focus on eliminating housing appraisal discrimination through its enforcement efforts and will develop outreach programs to educate homeowners about the housing appraisal process and homeowner rights. PCHR will also develop its own "Testing Program" to root out bias at the household level.
- PCHR will expand the scope of its Mediation Program beyond those who have experienced employment discrimination to include parties alleging housing and public accommodation discrimination.

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- PCHR will convene an interfaith forum commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of "Nostra Aetate," a document produced by the Second Vatican Council which speaks to the importance of interreligious dialogue that encourages respect (Nostra Aetate is a Latin phrase that translates to "In Our Time"). The forum will highlight the importance of recognizing and respecting the validity of different faith traditions through interreligious understanding and dialogue. This program will bring community faith leaders together to address interfaith prejudice through collaboration and community partnerships.

FY26 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Discrimination cases investigated	175	175	175
Ban the Box cases investigated	7	5	5
Neighbor disputes investigated	254	254	275
Intergroup conflict cases investigated	125	125	125
Prevention/education activities	436	436	436
Number of Fair Housing Commission cases	526	526	526
Number of brief service cases - discrimination, community relations, Fair Housing Commission ¹	1,409	1,410	1,000

¹This measure is difficult to predict and varies from year to year. As such, PCHR has set a conservative FY26 Target.

OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

The PCHR has a work-sharing agreement with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Under its current EEOC contract, the PCHR receives \$830 for each dual-filed discrimination case it investigates and closes. All revenue goes to the General Fund. In Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the PCHR closed 90 cases plus 1 round of engagement funding generating \$80,571 from the EEOC for the cases and outreach activities. The PCHR’s contract for federal FFY25 was 97 cases, which the PCHR has already fulfilled as of April 2025. The PCHR EEOC case numbers have remained relatively consistent for the past six years and, based on this, PCHR expects contract numbers and contract payments to remain at similar levels.

CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

N/A