

March

Newsletter

Metro Human Relations Commission



The mission of the Metro Human Relations Commission is to protect and promote the personal dignity, peace, safety, security, and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County through education, training, advocacy, and compliance services.

The Commission meets the first Monday of every month (unless it's a holiday) at 4pm at the Howard Office Building. The next full commission meeting is:

Monday, April 6, 4:00– 5:30 pm
700 2nd Avenue S. Nashville TN
37201

Our meetings are always open to the public and recorded live on YouTube. You can also give public comments in person at any meeting or [submit a comment online](#).

A WORD FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DAVIE TUCKER JR.



When elected officials speak, their words carry weight far beyond a microphone or social media post. That is why the recent statement by Andy Ogles—claiming that “Muslims don’t belong in American society” and that “pluralism is a lie”—is more than offensive rhetoric; it is reckless and dangerous.

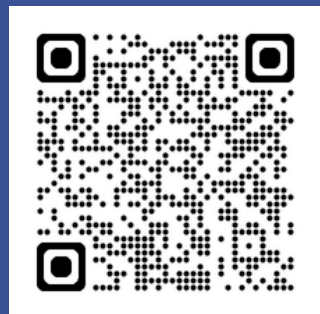
History shows us clearly that unchecked rhetoric can escalate. Words that dehumanize often become the seeds for public policy that targets a group of people and ultimately promotes violence. When a group is framed as not belonging, it becomes easier for others to justify discrimination, harassment, or even violence against them. The line between speech and action is not as wide as we might hope. We often forget the violent impact these words have on a person’s mind and spirit. While not visible, they are kicks and punches nonetheless, that still leave deep bruises and scars.

Muslim Americans—our neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens—hear these words and are left to wonder whether their government sees them as fully American. They are left to question their safety, their dignity, and their place in a nation that promises liberty and justice for all. And when no chorus of leaders rises to reject such rhetoric, the message becomes even clearer: you are on your own.

Hate speech, particularly when it comes from those entrusted with public leadership, does not exist in a vacuum. It legitimizes prejudice. It signals to others that exclusion, suspicion, and hostility are acceptable responses to difference. When such statements go unchallenged by other leaders across Tennessee—from the governor to members of Congress—it deepens the harm. Silence, in these moments, is not neutrality; it is permission, it is a license.

When those who should speak, don’t speak, we must speak. These are our neighbors, coworkers, friends and family. These haters must know that there are more people standing with our Muslim brothers and sisters and that they are not alone. Silence cannot be the final word.

We used Tableau to create interactive dashboards that will allow readers to explore the infographics in greater detail. The dashboards will be released in April on our website linked below.



Two of our No Hate On My Plate events are coming up with:

[Councilwoman Joy Styles](#)
Tuesday, March 31, 5:30–
7:30 pm

Southeast Community
Center, 5260 Hickory Hollow
Pkwy, Nashville, TN, 37013

[Barefoot Republic](#)
Thursday, April 16, 6:00–
8:00 pm
Barefoot Republic
Community Center, 15354
Old Hickory Blvd, Nashville,
TN, 37211

IncluCivics 2026 is set to be released in April

Jihan Mohammed, Ph.D



IncluCivics is a recurring report that provides an in-depth analysis of Metro's workforce. Previous editions were published in 2015, 2020, and 2023 to evaluate the extent to which Metro employees reflect the city's demographics by race and gender, and to assess salary equity. This updated edition draws on more than 97,000 employee records collected between 2015 and 2024.

Metro's workforce grew from 8,887 employees in 2015 to 10,847 in 2024. However, the overall demographic composition has changed very little during this period. White employees still make up about 61% of the workforce, and Black or African American employees account for roughly 30%. By contrast, Hispanic or Latino employees make up only 4% of the workforce, and Asian and multiracial employees combined remain under 5%. Compared to Davidson County's population, Hispanic residents constitute nearly 14% of the county but hold just 4% of Metro jobs, indicating ongoing barriers to recruitment and access for several minority groups.

We found pay equity along race and gender lines particularly worth noting. In 2015, women earned approximately \$0.89 for every dollar earned by men. Although median salaries rose for both groups by 2024, the gender gap slightly widened, from \$0.89 in 2015 to \$0.87 in 2024. Racial salary gaps remain similarly persistent. In 2024, Hispanic or Latino employees earned just \$0.82 and Black or African American employees earned \$0.80 for every dollar earned by White employees. Asian or Pacific Islander employees earned close to parity at \$0.98, while American Indian or Alaskan Native employees earned \$0.96. Employees identifying as Two or More Races earned \$0.90 per dollar. These wage disparities continue to disproportionately affect Black, Hispanic, and multiracial employees.

Finally, in 2016, 59% of Metro employees lived in Davidson County, compared with only 50% in 2024.

Employees living outside the county earn higher median salaries than those who reside within it, raising questions worth investigating further.

With this updated report and the areas of concern we have once again highlighted, we hope it provides Metro leadership with the insights needed to take meaningful action, particularly to address pay equity between women and men and among the diverse racial groups that are integral to Nashville and the Metro workforce.

MHRC Launches Community Survey on Language Access

Gavin Crowell-Williamson, M.E.D



Last Fall, MHRC set out to launch a new study examining the language services provided by the government of Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County. This work built on MHRC's [2017 Language Access Report](#), as well as a [2023-24 pilot with the Tennessee Language Center](#).

The study seeks to evaluate current language access practices across Metro departments, identify barriers for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop actionable strategies for equitable access to Metro programs and services, including education, healthcare, public transit and housing. To do this, we are assessing departmental policies, resources, and practices, working to identify gaps and barriers in service access. recommending practical, scalable improvements for compliance and efficiency, and strengthening interdepartmental coordination and digital inclusion.

It is with excitement that we announce the launch of our [community needs survey](#), which we have translated into nine languages (Spanish, three Kurdish dialects, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Nepali, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) in addition to English, in order to maximize its reach. We need your help getting this survey into every corner of Nashville – share with friends, family, colleagues, and anyone who might benefit from better language services in Nashville.

Our work has taken the following shape thus far:

- Stakeholder Engagement – Consult departments, community partners, and advocates on study design and implementation
- Departmental Self-Assessments – Collect departmental data on translation, interpretation, and accessibility services
- Policy Review – Examine language access plans, departmental policies, and digital standards

And is now entering the following phases:

- Community Needs Survey – Gather public input on language access services and experiences
- Recommendations and Feedback – Share findings, refine, and finalize coordinated actions

We look forward to what we can do together.

Do you need Human Relations' help with discrimination, bias, or hate? [Click here!](#)
Filing a Title VI inquiry or complaint? [Click here!](#)

Commissioner Spotlight

Whitney Pastorek



Whitney Pastorek (she/her/hers) joined the Metro Human Relations Commission in June of 2024, after being elected by the Metro Council. She is a writer, community organizer, and the executive producer of City Cast Nashville, a hyper-local daily podcast and newsletter designed to better connect people with our city, which was recently named Best Podcast in Nashville by the Nashville Scene.

Since moving to Nashville full-time in 2014 and escaping the professional grip of mainstream country music, Whitney has served as Nashville Project Lead for World Central Kitchen, and worked in Rep. Jim Cooper's office to create and lead VoteEarlyTN, a public information initiative to increase early voting ahead of the 2020 election. In 2021, she founded The 37208 Fund, Nashville's first private participatory grantmaking fund, to support and amplify the great community work being done in North Nashville.

Commissioners:

Dr. Ben Tran, Chair
Dakota Galban, Vice-chair
Jeff Teague, Vice-chair
Dahron Johnson, Secretary
Todd R. McKinney, Treasurer
Garlinda Burton
Keri Adams
Erin Coleman
Dr. Amy Crawford Charlton
Cara Ince
Sarah Martin
Whitney Pastorek
Dr. Carmen Reese Foster
William Slone
Claudia Weber
Alecia Wynn
Katie Feldhaus

As an organizer, she is proud to have worked on campaigns for CM Sean Parker, former school board member Christiane Buggs, Rep. Vincent Dixie, and Senator Charlane Oliver. She currently lives in East Nashville with her supermutt, Wally.



Are you interested in becoming a commissioner? [Click here!](#)

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MHRC-“Sees”



Here are some news stories that have caught our eye this month.

- The Metro Council passed the bill [BL20261288](#) that will authorize the Assessor of Property to prorate Tax Year 2026 property assessments for certain properties damaged by Winter Storm Fern.
- The Metro Council introduced bill [BL2026-1294](#) that will authorize a one-time bill credit to customers of the Metropolitan Department of Water and Sewerage Services as a result of the January 2026 ice storm. The bill passed on its second reading and is now referred.
- Mayor O’Connell approved resolution [RS2026-1834](#) appropriating a total of \$150,000 from a certain account of the Community Safety Fund for a grant to Southern Word, Inc. to provide school-age children with writing, presentation, and school-based mentorship to reduce and mitigate violence as part of the Community Safety Initiative.
- The Metro Council proposed ordinance [BL2026-1315](#) to establish a formal permit prioritization program for qualifying affordable housing and day care development projects. This program will let certain affordable housing and day care projects move through the city’s permitting line faster. The reviews themselves are not shortened, but these projects are moved to the front of the queue. Affordable housing projects get top priority, followed by day care centers. The ordinance explains which projects qualify, how city departments will manage the process, and how applicants can request prioritization.
- There are several state bills that we are tracking. Bill [HB1528/SB1743](#) was introduced to expand the definition of a person for whom a wrongful death action may be brought to include an unborn child beginning at fertilization, rather than in utero. The bill was also to extend the period of time from two to three years after which a spouse is rebuttably presumed to have abandoned a deceased spouse for purposes of bringing a wrongful death claim. The bill failed in Senate Judiciary Committee on 03/24/2026.
- Finally, bill [HB793/SB0836](#) that requires public schools to request immigration and or citizenship documents from students and report the data to the state. The House passed the bill, and it is now placed on Senate Message Calendar for 3/26/2026.

Here are some events that we recommend:



- [HIV Advocacy Day on the Hill 2026](#): March 24, 2026, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Downtown Nashville
- [TY Bailie: A Tribute to Dr. Lonnie Smith \(Jazz on the Move\)](#): March 29, 2026, at First Art Museum
- [Justice Day on the Hill: Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty](#): March 31, at Tennessee State Capitol
- [Racial Justice Challenge](#): April 6- May 4, 2026 (virtual)
- [VIVA Spring Festival](#): April 11, 2026, at Centennial Park
- [Earth Day Festival](#): April 18, 2026, at Centennial Park Bandshell