

**Onondaga County  
Office of Diversity & Inclusion**

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**ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND JUSTICE  
CENTER OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**2023 Annual Report**



**We promote a culture that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

STATEMENT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN  
RIGHTS/ADMINISTRATOR OF JUSTICE CENTER OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE



It is my pleasure to share the 2023 Annual Report. This year has been characterized by optimism, hard work, growth, and momentum. The Human Rights Commission and Justice Center Oversight Committee have achieved a new level of accountability as they addressed challenging issues in our community and correctional facilities.

The Human Rights Commission has actively advocated for various causes in our community, including supporting the Congolese community and holding question-and-answer sessions for newly arrived Americans in Onondaga County. The Commission also recognized and celebrated the efforts of a fellow Commissioner in championing equal rights for people with disabilities. Additionally, they provided guidance to a school district in CNY on the importance of cultural competency for students, staff, and administrators.

The Justice Center Oversight Committee, with its unwavering commitment to justice and fairness, has consistently fulfilled its duty of overseeing the Justice Center and Jamesville. The committee members have been proactive in addressing complaints raised by individuals in custody at both facilities, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights are protected.

As the members of the Human Rights Commission and Justice Center Oversight Committee continue to impact the lives of people in our community and facilitate important conversations for everyone, their commitment to advocating for marginalized individuals in our community remains unwavering. They are eagerly looking forward to engaging the community in their ongoing efforts to promote justice and equal opportunities for all.

*Montanette Humphrey*



# ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

## 2023 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

Rasheada Caldwell-Chair

Leonardo Sanchez  
Mia Wade  
Mbonimpa Banabas  
Nodesia Hernandez  
Hassina Adams  
Bishop H. Bernard Alex  
Ryan Smith

Liam O'Connor  
Rev. Roosevelt Baum  
Chris Gilkes  
Agnes McCray  
Samia Al-Fareh  
Lauren Rosenstein  
Paul Harvey

### Human Rights Commission Mission Statement

The Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission exists to foster the growth and development within Onondaga County in the field of human rights and to examine how various groups of persons within the community relate to each other. The mission is to facilitate communication among such groups, creating a climate in which citizens can understand and respect each other, and resulting in the elimination of conditions leading to discrimination against members of any such groups.

The Onondaga County/Syracuse Commission on Human Rights was established in 1997 through a resolution, demonstrating a commitment to promoting harmony, understanding, and mutual respect among all individuals in the diverse communities within the County and the City.

It is important to periodically assess the roles of public agencies in the context of our current community's needs. The Commission was reaffirmed and strengthened to meet these needs by establishing the Local Law in 2015. The Commission is composed of twenty-four Commissioners who are appointed by the County Executive, County Legislature, and the Mayor of Syracuse.



## Human Rights 2023 Highlights

- Agnes McCray, a Human Rights Commissioner, CNY ADA Committee Member, and advocate for individuals with disabilities, was presented with a proclamation by Onondaga County Executive J. Ryan McMahon II and Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh. The proclamation declared that the month of July is Disabilities Awareness Month.



- On March 19, 2023, Human Rights Commissioners attended the monthly meeting of the Congolese Community at the Northside Learning Center. The Human Rights Commission joined the Volunteer Lawyers Project to discuss certain topics and answer questions from the Congolese community on issues that ranged from immigration to seeking help with translation services for the Naturalization exam. Commissioners Liam O'Connor and Mbonimpa Banabas attended the event, which was organized by Mbonimpa Banabas and others in the Congolese community.
- In May, the Human Rights Commission collaborated with the New York State Division of Human Rights and Focus Greater Syracuse to host a Fair Housing Forum. Commissioner H. Bernard Alex acted as the moderator.
- The Human Rights Commission advocated for and facilitated conversations and communications to begin between the Jordan-Elbridge Central School District and commissioners. This action was taken after two parents came forward seeking assistance to address racially biased incidents that occurred at the district's middle school.

## **Human Rights Commission Intakes- 248**

Employment/termination – 53

Unspecified – 10

Shelter – 1

Correctional Facility (outside Onondaga County) - 1

County personnel – 1

Other – 31

ADA – 26

Landlord/Tenant – 45

Civil matter – 6

Hospital – 2

Police Issue (SPD) – 5

Information/inquiry – 24

Disability accommodation/Discrimination – 15

School (Onondaga County) – 11

LGBTQIA+ - 2

Police Issue (OCSO) – 1

Family Court (Onondaga County) - 1

Human Services -4

Public accommodation – 1

Other government agencies-8





## **Justice Center Oversight Committee**

### Justice Center Oversight Committee

Marissa Mims- Chair

Jeff Marier-Vice Chair  
Cassandra Jones-Ingram  
Tricia Wittkowski

John Falge  
Nicole Godfrey  
JoAnne Spoto-Decker

### **Mission & Objectives of the Justice Center Oversight Committee**

In 2015, the Onondaga County Legislature passed a local law to establish a jail oversight committee. This committee made up of community members, was formed in March 2016 and given the authority to review serious complaints and incidents involving the Onondaga County Jail, also known as the Justice Center. Additionally, the committee was empowered to make recommendations related to Justice Center policy, procedure, and training.

Complaints can be filed with the Justice Center Oversight Committee (JCOC) through the Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission staff. These staff members are authorized to investigate serious allegations according to the legislation that created the JCOC. Inmates, their family members, or advocates can submit complaints by letter, using a Justice Center Complaint Form, or in person at the Office of Diversity & Inclusion.

The Justice Center Oversight Committee is committed to its mission of ensuring the safety and well-being of all within the Justice Center. It sends its recommendations to the Sheriff, the County Executive, and key leaders of the County Legislature to help prevent future incidents within the Justice Center. This proactive approach is a testament to the committee's dedication to maintaining a safe and just environment. It's important to note that these recommendations focus solely on Justice Center policy, procedure, and training, and the JCOC does not make recommendations related to jail staff discipline.

## **Justice Center Intake -841**

Medical – 221

Mental Health – 20

Information/Inquiry – 48

Follow-up calls – 94

Multiple – 40

Staff bias/harassment – 46

Discipline – 21

Property – 9

Other – 22

Conditions – 107

Bail – 5

PREA – 22

Attorney/Lawyer – 48

Unspecified – 18

Visitations – 16

Police (OCSO) – 2

Police (SPD) – 1

HIPAA violation complaint – 1

Use of Force – 32

Covid protocol – 1

Complaints about the Grievance process – 30

Religious accommodation – 9

Food accommodation – 16

Inmate-to Inmate Threats- 5

Visits for HIPPA signature-5

Visits for welfare check-2

## **Justice Center Commission: 2023 Highlights**

- The Justice Center Oversight Committee (JCOC) meets on the first Wednesday of every month, except for July. The committee discusses complaints from incarcerated individuals at the Justice Center and Jamesville Correctional Facility. In 2023, the committee did not make any recommendations, but there were discussions about drafting a letter to county and city leaders to address the seriousness of the medical complaints from individuals housed at the Justice Center and Jamesville Correctional Facility.
- In August, JCOC Administrator Montanette Murphy and Chief Diversity Officer Monica Williams met with Custody Command staff at the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office to discuss ongoing medical complaints and offer a space for collaboration and conversation.

## **Jamesville Correctional Facility Intake- 175**

Staff Bias/harassment- 11

Discipline – 4

Use of force – 7

Follow up – 3

Other – 5

Medical – 46

Grievance – 8

Conditions – 28

Visitation – 6



Disability Accommodation – 1

Food accommodation – 4

Unspecified – 1

Attorney/Lawyer – 14

PREA – 15

Mental Health – 3

Logistics – 3

Multiple – 11

Protective Custody – 1

Information/inquiry – 3

Inmate to Inmate threats - 1



## **Key:**

**Info/logistics:** Loved ones and friends have complained about not receiving the correct mail count, and individuals have questioned the number of towels, shoes, or uniforms detainees can have.

**Use of Force:** Complainants report of unfair or uncomfortable use of force practices.

**Property:** Complaints that items are missing from their property; questions on how to allow family members to pick up property at the jail.

**Multiple:** Usually involves the detainee having more than one complaint during a call.

**Discipline:** Incarcerated individuals will disagree or complain about the decision to discipline concerning an incident and the fairness of discipline.

**Grievances:** Complaints about the grievance process at the Justice Center or Jamesville.

**Conditions:** Incarcerated individuals will complain about the lack of AC or heat in their cells, mold in the cells or showers, feces or urine inside a cell, and uncooked food on meal trays.

**Follow-up Inquiry:** Detainees will call to follow up on a complaint or condition lodged against a facility.

**Other:** Calls for requests for complaint forms, calls to their attorneys, loved ones, or friends; will also call to inquire about phone numbers and addresses of local agencies and the courts in our community and state.

**Protective Custody-** When an inmate is removed from the general population for his or her protection.

**HIPAA-** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act