



## Equal Rights Commission (ERC)

February 25, 2026

Mayor Cavalier Johnson  
Members of the Milwaukee Common Council  
City Hall  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**Tony Snell Rodriguez**  
Chair

**Elle Halo**  
Vice Chair

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Dear Mayor Johnson and Members of the Common Council,

On behalf of the City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission, I am pleased to submit the 2025 Annual Report.

Established under Chapter 109 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, the Equal Rights Commission is charged with promoting and protecting equality, equity, and human rights in our city through education, enforcement, and community engagement. Chapter 109 provides the legal framework for investigating and, where appropriate, adjudicating complaints of discrimination within the City of Milwaukee. In 2025, our focus was on strengthening our ability to carry out that mandate effectively, transparently, and with measurable impact.

This year marked important progress in rebuilding the Commission's operational capacity. We moved from a period of vacancies to a more fully staffed and fully seated body, ensuring that the responsibilities outlined in Chapter 109 are supported by both commissioner leadership and professional staff expertise. With key positions within the Office of Equity and Inclusion filled, the Commission is better positioned to provide consistent oversight, timely response, and informed decision-making.

A significant milestone in 2025 was the formalization and implementation of standardized civil rights complaint procedures. In collaboration with the Department of Administration, the Office of Equity and Inclusion, and the City Attorney's Office, the Commission finalized policies and procedures governing complaint intake, review, and processing. A confidential, translatable online complaint form and structured tracking system were launched to increase accessibility and transparency. These improvements modernize our enforcement infrastructure and strengthen public confidence in the City's civil rights processes.

Data continues to guide our work. The 2025 complaint analysis and heat mapping identified geographic concentrations of complaints, particularly in zip codes 53209, 53206, and 53225. These findings are shaping our outreach, education, and enforcement priorities. By aligning resources with demonstrated community need, we are shifting from reactive enforcement alone to a more strategic, prevention-oriented approach. Data analysis will also inform future evaluation of Chapter 109 to determine whether policy amendments are warranted.

In addition to enforcement, the Commission maintained its role as a public forum for civil rights dialogue. We convened twelve full Commission meetings and hosted formal public hearings on facial recognition technology and transgender violence and protections—issues that implicate fundamental civil liberties and equal protection under the law. These hearings reflect the Commission's responsibility to examine emerging concerns and ensure Milwaukee's policies uphold dignity and fairness.

Community engagement remained central to our work. Through participation in major cultural festivals and the City's 8th annual International Human Rights Day celebration, we strengthened awareness of civil rights protections and reinforced Milwaukee's commitment to democracy and human rights.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our Commissioners and the leadership of the Office of Equity and Inclusion staff. Commissioners bring lived experience, professional expertise, and community perspective that ground this work in reality. Staff leadership, responsiveness, preparation, and follow-through ensure that the Commission remains effective, accessible, and trusted. I am deeply grateful for their partnership and service.

We look forward to continued collaboration with your offices in 2026 as we implement a unified case management system, expand targeted outreach, and continue strengthening enforcement under Chapter 109. Together, we can ensure that Milwaukee's civil rights protections remain strong, data-informed, and responsive to the residents we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Snell Rodriguez  
Chair, City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission



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#### About the Equal Rights Commission

The City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission works to eliminate discrimination and promote equal rights through enforcement of city ordinances, policy guidance, education, and community engagement.

#### Accessibility

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