



[SF 579](#) – Local Civil Rights Commission (LSB1493SV.1)
Staff Contact: Nathan Moore (515.725.0155) nathan.moore@legis.iowa.gov
Fiscal Note Version – Final Action

Description

[Senate File 579](#) modifies provisions related to local civil rights agencies or commissions operating under Iowa Code chapter [216](#). The Bill provides that a city or local government shall not enact an ordinance or other law that is broader than, or that establishes categories of unfair or discriminatory practices different from, those provided under Iowa Code chapter 216. The Bill permits cities of any population to maintain an independent local civil rights agency or commission. Current law requires cities with a population of 29,000 or greater to maintain a local civil rights commission.

The Bill requires a local civil rights agency or commission to notify the Iowa Office of Civil Rights (IOCR) when a complaint is filed and after notice has been provided to all parties. A local civil rights agency or commission must also inform a person filing a complaint that the person may file the complaint with the IOCR in lieu of filing with the local agency or commission. The Bill further requires that, if a complaint has been pending with a local civil rights commission or agency for at least 12 months as of the Bill's effective date, the commission or agency must notify all parties of their right to transfer the complaint directly to the IOCR. The commission or agency must also notify the IOCR of those pending cases.

The Bill takes effect upon enactment.

Background

Iowa currently has 25 local civil rights commissions pursuant to Iowa Code section [216.19](#). Local commissions may investigate complaints alleging violations of the [Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965](#) and may cross-file complaints with the IOCR.

The IOCR receives approximately 50.0% of its funding from the federal government and 50.0% from the State General Fund. The IOCR maintains federal workshare agreements with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for most employment cases and with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for most housing cases. Federal reimbursement is not received for investigations involving education, public accommodation, or credit.

For FY 2026, the IOCR was appropriated \$1.4 million in the annual Administration and Regulation Appropriations Act.

Assumptions

- Of the 25 existing local commissions, 10 currently conduct investigations.
- The number of complaints referred to the IOCR for investigation is expected to increase. Because the requirement for certain cities to maintain a civil rights commission would change from mandatory to permissive, some cities may choose to eliminate their commissions. If this occurs, all pending and future complaints from those jurisdictions would be transferred to the IOCR.

- The IOCR’s workload is expected to increase as respondent-requested transfers at 12 months, and complaints pending longer than 12 months at the time of enactment, are transferred to the IOCR. This increase will require additional processes to complete existing investigations and to investigate transferred cases.
- The number of aged cases is unknown; therefore, the potential increase in investigative timelines cannot be determined. However, the IOCR indicates that timelines could increase by as much as 12 months.
- It is unknown how many transferred cases would qualify for federal reimbursement under existing workshare agreements. It is unknown whether federal workshare funding levels will increase, decrease, or remain stable.
- Cases transferred that are pending longer than 12 months from local commissions will not qualify for reimbursement under federal workshare agreements; therefore, additional general funds will be needed to process these complaints.
- The IOCR estimates that an additional 5.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions will be required to investigate and administratively process additional complaints. Cost estimates for these positions are based on starting salaries and benefits and include the following job classes:
 - 2.0 Attorney 1 FTE positions at an estimated cost of \$170,000.
 - 2.0 Civil Rights Specialist FTE positions at an estimated cost of \$148,000.
 - 1.0 Administrative Assistant 2 FTE position at an estimated cost of \$69,000.

Fiscal Impact

Senate File 579 is estimated to result in a minimum cost of approximately \$387,000 annually to the IOCR for 5.0 FTE positions. It is unknown what portion of this cost would be funded by the General Fund or through federal funding.

Source

Iowa Office of Civil Rights

/s/ Jennifer Acton

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The Fiscal Note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to [Joint Rule 17](#) and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this Fiscal Note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.
