

CHAPTER 1002

CIVIL RIGHTS — LOCAL LAWS, LOCAL COMMISSIONS, AND LOCAL AGENCIES

S.F. 579

AN ACT relating to local laws implementing the Iowa civil rights Act of 1965, local civil rights commissions, and local civil rights agencies, and including effective date provisions.

Be It Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

Section 1. Section 216.19, subsection 1, unnumbered paragraph 1, Code 2026, is amended to read as follows:

All cities shall, to the extent possible, protect the rights of the citizens of this state secured by the Iowa civil rights Act. A city or local government shall not enact any ordinance or other law which is broader or has different categories of unfair or discriminatory practices than those provided in this chapter. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as indicating any of the following:

Sec. 2. Section 216.19, subsection 1, paragraph c, Code 2026, is amended by striking the paragraph.

Sec. 3. Section 216.19, subsection 2, Code 2026, is amended to read as follows:

2. ~~A city with a population of twenty-nine thousand, or greater, shall~~ may maintain an independent local civil rights agency or commission consistent with agency rules adopted pursuant to chapter 17A. An agency or commission for which a staff is provided shall have control over such staff. ~~A city required to maintain that maintains~~ a local civil rights agency or commission shall structure and adequately fund the agency or commission in order to effect cooperative undertakings with the Iowa office of civil rights and to aid in effectuating the purposes of this chapter.

Sec. 4. Section 216.19, Code 2026, is amended by adding the following new subsections:

NEW SUBSECTION. 9. Any complaint filed with a local agency or local commission where a party is a political subdivision shall be referred to the Iowa office of civil rights for processing.

NEW SUBSECTION. 10. *a.* A local agency or local commission complaint, upon request by any party, shall be transferred to the Iowa office of civil rights for processing if the complaint alleges a violation of this chapter and has not been resolved within twelve months of the filing date of the complaint.

b. The local agency or local commission shall within three hundred days of the filing date of the complaint do all of the following:

(1) (a) Send notice to all parties of a party's right to direct transfer of the complaint to the Iowa office of civil rights from the local agency or local commission after twelve months if the complaint alleges a violation of this chapter. The notice shall be sent to all parties by verified mail, or electronic notice if the party is enrolled in electronic notification.

(b) The local agency or local commission shall notify the Iowa office of civil rights of the complaint upon the provision of notice to all parties.

(2) Cross file a complaint with the Iowa office of civil rights if the local agency or local commission complaint arises from an alleged violation of a state law, rule, or regulation under the jurisdiction of the Iowa office of civil rights. This subparagraph shall not be construed to prohibit a local agency or local commission from cross filing a complaint with any other federal or state agency, commission, or entity, if the local agency or local commission complaint arises from an alleged violation of a state or federal law, rule, or regulation of a state or federal agency, commission, or entity.

NEW SUBSECTION. 11. The term of a commissioner appointed to a local agency or local commission shall be for two years.

NEW SUBSECTION. 12. A local agency or local commission that accepts complaints shall inform a person filing a complaint that the person may file the complaint with the Iowa office of civil rights in lieu of filing with the local agency or local commission.

Sec. 5. COMPLAINTS FILED WITH LOCAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSIONS AND LOCAL CIVIL RIGHTS AGENCIES. If, as of the effective date of this Act, a complaint has been pending with a local civil rights commission or local civil rights agency for at least twelve months from the filing date of the complaint, the local civil rights commission or local civil rights agency shall provide all parties notice of a party's right to direct transfer of the complaint to the Iowa office of civil rights. The local commission or agency shall also notify the Iowa office of civil rights of all the pending cases for which notice was provided pursuant to this section.

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act, being deemed of immediate importance, takes effect upon enactment.

Approved March 10, 2026