



Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 2:00 PM
Place: Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
Hybrid Meeting (In-Person and Remote) and YouTube Livestream
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh_wjAthLJTQf-KMgMGv1Yw

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination held a public meeting on Thursday, March 19, 2026, in a hybrid format, with commissioners and staff participating both in person and remotely. The meeting was livestreamed for public observation.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Sunila Thomas George
Commissioner Christina Brown
Commissioner Jeremy Scheiner
Commissioner Edward Mitnick
Commissioner Steven Locke (remote)

Staff Present:

Deirdre Ann Hosler, General Counsel
Michael Memmolo, Executive Director
Lila L. Roberts, Esq., Chief of Investigations
Ruthy Barros, Recording Secretary (remote)

1. Call to Order

Chair Sunila Thomas George called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM. The Chair stated that notice of the meeting and agenda had been properly posted in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law on the Commission's website.

The Chair then conducted a roll call of commissioners in alphabetical order. Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Locke, Commissioner Mitnick, Commissioner Scheiner, and Chair Thomas George were present. The Chair announced that a quorum was present and that the meeting could proceed.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Brown</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

2. Approval of Minutes from February 17, 2026

The Chair introduced the draft minutes from the February 17, 2026 meeting and asked whether there was any discussion. Hearing none, Chair Thomas George moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Scheiner seconded the motion, and the motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Brown</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

3. Commissioners' Individual Events and Activities Update

The Chair formally welcomed Commissioner Christina Brown to the Commission and noted that Commissioner Brown brings a strong background and deep commitment to education and equity. Commissioner Brown thanked the Chair and stated that she was honored to serve on the Commission. She remarked that service is “the rent we pay for living” and expressed her commitment to contributing her time and talents in support of equity, due process, and MCAD’s educational mission.

The Chair then invited additional updates from the commissioners. Commissioner Jeremy Scheiner acknowledged several holidays and observances, including Saint Patrick’s Day, Ramadan, Eid, Women’s History Month, and International Women’s Day. He also noted that Black History Month had not been recognized at the prior meeting and acknowledged the passing of Reverend Jesse Jackson in the previous month. The Chair thanked Commissioner Scheiner for those remarks and reflected on the importance of recognizing the many holidays and observances celebrated in Massachusetts and beyond.

The Chair also commented on a recent *Mass Lawyers Weekly* article concerning the Commission’s draft procedural regulations currently out for public comment. The Chair stated that, while some members of the bar may have questions or concerns regarding the proposed changes, the Commission’s use of technology is intended to enhance its work, not replace individualized review. She emphasized that the goal is to expand access, especially for vulnerable populations, and to improve complaint filing and processing while remaining grounded in the Commission’s mission.

4. Executive Director's Update

Executive Director Michael Memmolo provided a comprehensive update regarding the Commission’s finances, operations, and major initiatives. He welcomed Commissioner Brown and noted that the Commission now has its full complement of seated commissioners under the revised statute.

Mr. Memmolo first addressed MCAD’s federal contracts. He explained that federal contracts currently account for approximately 20 percent of the agency’s operating budget, reflecting a significant reduction from prior years. He stated that both the EEOC and HUD contracts ended in September 2025 and have not yet been renewed. He reported that MCAD had received recent

notice that the EEOC intended to move forward with contracts, although the agency was carefully reviewing the proposed terms. He also stated that HUD had not yet approached the agency regarding a fiscal year 2026 contract.

Mr. Memmolo explained that contract work performed in one fiscal year supports agency operations in the following fiscal year. He stated that MCAD had completed both its EEOC and HUD fiscal year 2025 contract work. He further reported that the combined contracts totaled approximately \$1.4 million, but HUD had not yet paid the agency for that work. He explained that MCAD had received a payment voucher for approximately \$821,000 from HUD but had not signed it due to concerns regarding the dates and language contained in the document. He stated that internal discussions were ongoing regarding whether the agency could accept the voucher. He further reported that the Governor's office, Administration and Finance, and the Legislature had indicated that the Commonwealth would step in if HUD funding did not materialize or could not be accepted.

Turning to the fiscal year 2027 state budget, Mr. Memmolo stated that the Governor's House 2 recommendation of approximately \$10.422 million would cover anticipated collective bargaining increases, step increases, and other expected costs, while also accounting for the possibility that MCAD may receive no federal contract revenue from either EEOC or HUD in the coming fiscal year. He explained that the recommended appropriation is approximately \$1.6 million higher than the current fiscal year appropriation, but emphasized that the increase is intended to level fund the agency rather than expand operations. He noted that the increase represents the estimated spending from the agency's federal contracts, not their full value which is closer to \$2.2 million, leaving approximately \$600,000 still unfunded.

Mr. Memmolo also outlined the next steps in the budget process. He informed the commissioners that with the Chair and Chief Financial Officer Randall Lui he was scheduled to meet with the Chair of House Ways and Means the following day, and that he, Randall Lui, and Justine LaVoye would appear before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means the following Tuesday to testify in support of the Governor's recommended funding level for MCAD.

Mr. Memmolo then provided a high-level breakdown of MCAD's expenditures. He explained that 98 percent of the agency's spending consists of required fixed costs, including payroll, rent, language access services, and required IT obligations. He stated that 83 percent of the total budget goes to payroll and related personnel costs. He also reviewed expenses related to contract employees, printing, subscriptions, office supplies, office rent, interpretation and translation services, copier and printer costs, and IT chargebacks. He reported that the annual maintenance, support, and licensing cost for the Commission's Comprehensive Case Management System, or CCMS, is expected to be approximately \$600,000 once the system fully transitions out of the design and build phase.

Mr. Memmolo next addressed CCMS. He stated that the employee-facing workspace launched internally on March 2, 2026, marking the first phase of a three-phase rollout. He explained that staff are now using the system both for legacy cases migrated from the prior system and for newly filed cases being entered directly into CCMS. He stated that the public-facing portal is being opened gradually, with some attorneys and pro se parties already beginning to use it. He

praised MCAD staff, senior managers, and project partners for their work during rollout and thanked stakeholders who participated in testing the attorney and pro se portals. He also thanked Accelare, the vendor that built the application, and Verity Consulting Company Inc., the project consultant.

Commissioner Scheiner thanked Mr. Memmolo for his report and for the continued support the agency has received. At the Chair's request, Mr. Memmolo also addressed the proposed MCAD fund. He explained that MCAD has supported legislation that would establish a dedicated fund to create a mechanism for receiving and accounting for gifts and contributions. He noted that, although the agency is already authorized by statute to accept such gifts and contributions, it currently lacks the formal mechanism needed to administer them. He further explained that the proposed legislation would allow taxpayers to designate MCAD as a recipient of voluntary donations through the Massachusetts income tax form. In response to a question from Commissioner Scheiner, it was clarified that the MCAD fund would need to be created through standalone legislation and is not part of the annual appropriations bill. General Counsel Deirdre Ann Hosler added that the House version of the bill had most recently been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Commissioner Brown then asked about the benefits staff were seeing from the CCMS transition. Chief of Investigations Lila L. Roberts, Esq. stated that the system has already shown promise in creating efficiencies and reducing administrative burdens that historically fell on both support staff and legal staff. Chief Roberts noted that staff expect these efficiencies to help move cases more quickly and in a timelier manner. General Counsel Deirdre Ann Hosler added that Clerk of the Commission Theresa Lepore has played an instrumental role in helping staff learn the new system while also managing issues related to the migration of older cases and the entry of newly filed matters. She commended staff for adapting to the transition and assisting one another throughout the rollout.

Mr. Memmolo concluded with an update on the South Coast office. He stated that MCAD is statutorily required to maintain an office in Fall River and explained that the relevant budget language changed from New Bedford to Fall River in fiscal year 2025. He reported that the agency has been working with the Department of Transitional Assistance to establish what he described as MCAD's first hybrid office, intended to provide the public with a high-quality and technology-enabled way to interact with the agency. He stated that the anticipated timeframe for opening the office was sometime in April.

5. General Counsel's Update

General Counsel Deirdre Ann Hosler welcomed Commissioner Brown and then advised the Commission that the Office of General Counsel would be undertaking work in response to the withdrawal of federal HUD guidance. She explained that, on September 17, 2025, HUD withdrew a number of guidance documents issued by its Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. She stated that the withdrawn materials included guidance concerning national origin discrimination affecting limited English proficient persons, assistance animals for people with disabilities in housing and HUD-funded programs, enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, the use of criminal records by housing providers, source of income testing, and digital advertising of housing and real estate transactions. She noted that the withdrawals represented a

significant change and that it was difficult to predict their full impact on fair housing enforcement.

Attorney Hosler stated that one immediate area of concern involved the rescission of guidance relating to assistance animals. She reported that the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office and the Massachusetts Office on Disability had reached out to MCAD in January to propose joint state guidance to bridge the gap left by the withdrawal of the federal material. She stated that the Commission's position on that issue is already reflected in the *Fortin Evangelista* full Commission decision and that the proposed guidance would be consistent with that decision. She noted that any formal participation by MCAD in such joint guidance would require a vote of the commissioners.

During commissioner questions, Commissioner Scheiner asked about the distinction between emotional support animals and assistance animals and how that issue was being approached. Attorney Hosler responded that the *Fortin Evangelista* decision treats assistance animals as a broad umbrella category that includes both service animals and emotional support animals. She stated that the anticipated joint guidance would aim to provide even clearer explanation and examples. The Chair added that both the hearing officer's decision and the full Commission decision are available on MCAD's website.

Commissioner Brown then asked how many guidance documents had been removed by HUD and how Massachusetts would determine which areas to prioritize for replacement state guidance. Attorney Hosler responded that she did not yet know the full scope of all HUD guidance that may have been removed, but emphasized that the assistance animal issue had created an immediate and concrete need. She explained that landlords were already taking advantage of the absence of federal guidance and that the Massachusetts Office on Disability had long relied upon that guidance when advising housing providers and tenants regarding reasonable accommodation obligations. She stated that assistance animals therefore represented the first area in which MCAD had identified an acute need to help bridge a gap created by the loss of federal guidance. The Chair added that MCAD already maintains robust guidance and fact sheets on its website concerning protected classes under Massachusetts law and stated that the agency should continue to ensure that strong state guidance remains available where the federal government has created a void.

6. Tentative Plan for Assessing Public Comment on Draft Rules of Procedure, 804 CMR 1.00

The Chair then turned to the Commission's tentative plan for reviewing public comments on the draft procedural regulations, 804 CMR 1.00, following the close of the public comment period on March 31, 2026. The Chair stated that the next major step would be for the commissioners to review and discuss the draft regulations, the proposed revisions recommended by the Office of General Counsel, and the comments submitted by attorneys, stakeholders, and community groups. She observed that commissioners might also have their own questions and concerns beyond the submitted comments and that the review process would likely require significant time and planning.

Commissioner Locke suggested that the Commission schedule three two-hour meetings, with two firm dates and a third tentative date, given the volume of material and anticipated discussion. Commissioner Scheiner agreed that multiple meetings would likely be necessary and asked how the discussions would be structured, particularly in light of the number of comments some sections had attracted. Attorney Hosler advised against dividing the regulations into separate halves because many provisions are interrelated and difficult to consider in isolation. She stated that the Office of General Counsel would prepare a memorandum and an organized compilation of the public comments, likely in spreadsheet form, and would include the rationale behind substantive proposed changes to assist the commissioners in their review, and distribute that memo to the Commissioners by Thursday March 26, 2026. The Chair stated that, if possible, it would be beneficial for the meetings to be held in person so that commissioners could engage directly with management and counsel during the review process.

After discussion, the commissioners identified Friday, April 3, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, and Monday, April 6, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, as the first two dates for regulation review meetings. A third possible meeting in May was also discussed as a tentative option if additional time proved necessary.

7. Other Business.

The Chair asked whether there was any other business to come before the Commission. No additional business was raised.

8. Next Meeting Date

The Commission confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Friday, April 3, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, for continued discussion of the draft procedural regulations. An additional meeting was also scheduled for Monday, April 6, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

9. Adjournment

At approximately 3:19 PM, after confirming there were no further questions or remarks, the Chair stated that the Commission had reached the end of the posted agenda. The meeting was then adjourned by a vote of 5-0.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Brown</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Commissioner Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

The meeting adjourned at 3:19 PM.

List of Documents and Other Items Used

1. Notice of Meeting and Agenda dated March 19, 2026
2. Draft Meeting Minutes from February 17, 2026



NOTICE OF MEETING AND AGENDA

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25, and the extended temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law (most recently extended on March 28, 2025), notice is hereby given of a meeting of the **Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination**. The meeting will take place:

Thursday | March 19, 2026 | 2:00PM
HYBRID MEETING - USING YouTube

Please note that the Commission will conduct this public meeting in person and remotely utilizing collaboration technology. Use of this technology is intended to ensure an adequate, alternative means of public access to the Commission's deliberations for any interested member of the public. If there is any technical problem with the Commission's remote connection, an alternative conference line will be noticed immediately on www.mass.gov/mcad.

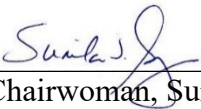
All documents and presentations related to this agenda will be available for review on the MCAD website.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes – February 17, 2026 Commission Meeting Minutes **VOTE**
3. Commissioners' Individual Events and Activities Update
4. Executive Director's Update:
 - FY27 budget presentation and federal contract update
 - Launch of the Comprehensive Case Management System ("CCMS") internal workspace and improvements to agency procedures
 - Status of Fall River MCAD office
5. General Counsel's Update:
 - Guidance on assistance animals in housing to be jointly developed with fair housing partners
6. Tentative plan for assessing public comment on draft Rules of Procedure 804 CMR 1.00 at close of public comment period on March 31, 2026
7. Other Business - Reserved for matters the Chair did not reasonably anticipate at the time of posting.

8. Next Meeting Date – Including establishing dates for discussion on the Draft Procedural Regulations

9. Adjournment

I certify that on this date, this Notice was posted as “MCAD Public Meeting Notice and Agenda (March 19, 2026)” at www.mass.gov/mcad and emailed to regs@sec.state.ma.us. Posted to website: March 16, 2026 at 3:30 PM.



Chairwoman, Sunila Thomas George

This meeting is open to all interested individuals. If there are any questions pertaining to accessibility and/or further assistance is needed, please email ruthy.barros2@mass.gov.



Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: February 17, 2026, at 1:30PM
Place: Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
Tuesday | February 17, 2026 | 1:30PM
Hybrid Meeting (In-Person & Remote) and YouTube Livestream
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh_wjAthLJTQf-KMgMGv1Yw

The Commission conducted this public meeting in a hybrid format, with both in-person and remote participation and livestream access via YouTube, in compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18–25, and the extended temporary provisions. This technology provided an adequate alternative means of public access to the Commission’s deliberations. All documents and presentations related to this agenda are available on the MCAD website.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Sunila Thomas George
Edward Mitnick (remote)
Jeremy Scheiner
Steven Locke (remote)

1. Call to Order

Chair Thomas George called the meeting to order at 1:33PM. Roll call attendance was conducted, confirming all Commissioners were present.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Edward Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Jeremy Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Steven Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

2. Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2026

The minutes from December 2, 2025, were reviewed. Chair Thomas George moved to approve the minutes as drafted. Commissioner Mitnick seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by a vote of 4-0. The Chair clarified that the new per diem Commissioners were allowed to vote even though they are new Commissioners.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Edward Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Jeremy Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Steven Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

3. Commissioners' Update – Welcome new Commissioners

The Chair welcomed the new per diem Commissioners and stated they will be tremendous assets to the Commission. The Chair opened the floor for Commissioners to introduce themselves and make remarks:

Steven Locke: Commissioner Locke brings extensive experience in employment and discrimination law. He previously served as General Counsel at the MCAD from 2001 to 2005 and then went on to serve as General Counsel at Brandeis University for 19 years. Commissioner Locke looks forward to returning to work with the Commission in this role.

Edward Mitnick: Commissioner Mitnick began working with the Commission 35 years ago and later had the honor and privilege of being appointed as a hearing officer. He continued to serve the Commission through train-the-trainer sessions over the years. It is an honor and privilege for him to serve as a Commissioner and to fulfill the statutory obligations of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination in eradicating discrimination throughout the Commonwealth.

Jeremy Scheiner: Commissioner Scheiner expressed his deep gratitude for the opportunity to serve as a Commissioner at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and to act as a new steward of the Commission. He thanked the Attorney General's Office for entrusting him with this appointment, as well as the Chair and staff for warmly welcoming him to the Commission. Commissioner Scheiner previously served as Director of Training, Recruitment, and Legislative Affairs at the Commission from 2017 to 2020. After serving at the MCAD, Commissioner Scheiner went to work at the ACLU. He found the work to be both familiar and deeply meaningful. Now returning to the MCAD as a Commissioner, he looks forward to working with staff and constituents to eradicate discrimination throughout the Commonwealth.

Chair Thomas George thanked the new Commissioners, the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's Office for these esteemed appointments and reminded that we are waiting for one more appointment to bring the total per diem Commissioners to four.

4. MCAD Draft Procedural Regulations – Public Comment Period Extension

Chair Thomas George heard from number of individuals asking to extend the public comment period. The holidays between December and January made it difficult for stakeholders to review the proposed regulations and provide meaningful comments. Before opening discussion, the Chair offered brief comments about the proposed regulations.

The Chair thanked all participants for their engagement in the MCAD's three public hearing comment sessions. She acknowledged that there may have been some confusion regarding certain proposed regulatory changes and noted that it was not entirely clear whether the misunderstanding stemmed from the proposed regulations themselves or from the anticipated launch of MCAD's new portal and online platform. The Chair recognized that practitioners may feel uncertain about these changes.

She emphasized that the Commission remains fully open for business five days per week, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and will continue to assist anyone who comes to any MCAD office to file

a complaint. Staff will be available in person to help with registering for the new portal, filing complaints, and assisting *pro se* complainants who may require accommodation for language access and/or disabilities.

The Chair then addressed MCAD’s newest regulatory change, specifically the creation of the Preliminary Investigations Unit. She noted that the goal of this unit is to provide investigators with additional time to explore complaints and allegations by interviewing complainants, identifying comparators, ensuring respondent contact information is accurate, and assisting *pro se* complainants in navigating the new portal.

Finally, Chair Thomas George expressed hope that extending the proposed regulation public comment period will allow stakeholders to review the changes with a fresh perspective, particularly with respect to how the new regulations will enable the Commission to operate more efficiently, improve accessibility, and better fulfill its mission in a timely and effective manner.

Commissioner Mitnick asked what the proposed extension would be.

Chair Thomas George explained that the original 60-day public comment period was consistent with prior extension practices. However, due to the holiday season and the feedback received during the three public hearings, she determined that an additional extension was warranted. She therefore proposed extending the comment period through March 31, 2026.

She noted that this extension would more than double the typical public comment period for proposed regulations but would provide stakeholders with sufficient time to engage in a thoughtful and intentional review. This additional time, she explained, would allow comments to reflect consideration of the regulations as a whole, rather than focusing solely on the proposed changes. She further emphasized that the extension offers an opportunity for stakeholders to revisit the regulations with a clearer understanding of their intent.

Commissioner Mitnick moved to approve extending the comment period to March 31, 2026. Commissioner Locke seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

<i>Chair Thomas George</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Edward Mitnick</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Jeremy Scheiner</i>	<i>Aye.</i>
<i>Steven Locke</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

The motion passed unanimously 4-0

4. Statement from the Chair on Investigating Commissioner Assignment

As the Commission is in a transformation period, going from three full-time Commissioners to one full-time Chair and 4 per diem Commissioners, which will affect the Commission’s processes, the Chair made the following brief statement. Due to the high volume of matters currently under investigation and in the interest of efficiency, and as the Commission’s only full-time Investigating Commissioner, I have delegated authority to the Acting Chief of

Investigations to review and approve certain investigative actions, including the execution of certain investigative dispositions.

5. Other Business

No additional matters were raised.

7. Next Meeting Date

Once the fourth per diem Commissioner is appointed, next and future meeting dates will be announced.

8. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 1:54PM. A motion to adjourn was made, by the Chair and seconded by Commissioner Mitnick, and approved unanimously by a vote of 4–0.

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Thomas George

Aye.

Edward Mitnick

Aye.

Jeremy Scheiner

Aye.

Steven Locke

Aye.

Meeting adjourned 1:54PM

DRAFT