


June 7, 2021

TO: Hon. Benjamin Boykin, Chair
Hon. Alfreda Williams, Vice Chair
Hon. MaryJane Shimsky, Majority Leader
Hon. Margaret Cunzio, Minority Leader

FROM: George Latimer 
Westchester County Executive

RE: Message Requesting Immediate Consideration: **LOCAL LAW –
Discriminatory Harassment Law.**

This will confirm my request that the Board of Legislators allow submission of the referenced communication to be submitted to the Board of Legislators June 7, 2021 Agenda.

Transmitted herewith for your review and approval is a Local Law amending chapter 700 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to discriminatory harassment.

Therefore, since this communication is of the utmost importance, it is respectfully submitted that the County Board of Legislators accepts this submission for June 7, 2021 “blue sheet” calendar.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.



George Latimer
County Executive

June 4, 2021

Westchester County Board of Legislators
800 Michaelian Office Building
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, New York 10601

Dear Honorable Members of the Board:

I respectfully request that your Honorable Board adopt the attached Local Law amending Chapter 700 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to Discriminatory Harassment.

The Westchester County Human Rights Law (“Human Rights Law”) is intended to address and prevent discrimination based on bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance among residents of Westchester County, because of actual or perceived protected characteristics. Under the Human Rights Law, it is unlawful to discriminate in relation to employment, public accommodations, housing accommodation, commercial space and land transactions, and the issuing of credit.

The Human Rights Law does not currently protect against discriminatory harassment outside of the nexuses identified above. Discriminatory harassment is threats, intimidation, coercion, or violence that interferes with a person’s civil or constitutional rights, and is motivated, in part, by that person’s actual or perceived membership in a protected class. Under the Human Rights Law, protected classes include race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, creed, familial status, marital status, alienage/citizenship status and status as a victim of sexual abuse, stalking or domestic violence. For example, your Committee is aware of the surge in violence against Asian-Americans in New York, some of which may be considered discriminatory harassment.

The proposed amendment will make it a unlawful discriminatory practice for a person to by force or threat of force, knowingly injure, intimidate or interfere with or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to such other person by the constitution or laws of the United States, the constitution or laws of this state, or by local law, or by this chapter, when such injury, intimidation, interference, or threat is motivated, in whole or in part, by the actual or perceived group identity of the other person or because of such person’s actual or

perceived status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or stalking. For example, the amendment will prohibit interfering with a person's right to the enjoyment of their home or residence, or to utilize and enjoy public transportation free from threats, intimidation, harassment, coercion or violence because of the person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class. The amendment will enable the Commission to award compensatory damages, punitive damages, reasonable attorney's fees, and seek equitable relief where appropriate. The amendment will work to increase the reporting of hate incidents, which will assist law enforcement in developing mitigation strategies to address violations of the Human Rights Law, as well as inform the work of the Commission. The proposed amendment will not, however, be construed to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of any person, as this legislation is meant to address discriminatory harassment only. The proposed amendments will not, however, be construed to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of any Westchester County resident, as this legislation is meant to address discriminatory conduct only.

The proposed project does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning, dated May 14, 2021, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators.

I respectfully request that your Honorable Board adopt the attached Local Law amending Chapter 700 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to Discriminatory Harassment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George Latimer", written in a cursive style.

GEORGE LATIMER
County Executive

GL/nn
Enclosure

TO: BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee recommends the adoption of “A LOCAL LAW amending Chapter 700 to the Laws of Westchester County relating to Discriminatory Harassment.”

Your Committee is advised that the Westchester County Human Rights Law (“Human Rights Law”) is intended to address and prevent discrimination, bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance in Westchester County because of a person’s actual or perceived membership in a protected class. Under the Human Rights Law, it is unlawful to discriminate in relation to employment, public accommodations, housing accommodation, commercial space and land transactions, and the issuance of credit.

Your Committee notes that the Human Rights Law does not currently protect against discriminatory harassment outside of the nexuses identified above. Discriminatory harassment is threats, intimidation, coercion, or violence that interferes with a person’s civil or constitutional rights, and is motivated, in part, by that person’s actual or perceived membership in a protected class. Under the Human Rights Law,

protected classes include race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, creed, familial status, marital status, alienage/citizenship status and status as a victim of sexual abuse, stalking or domestic violence. For example, your Committee is aware of the surge in violence against Asian-Americans in New York, some of which may be considered discriminatory harassment.

Your Committee is advised that the proposed amendment will make it a unlawful discriminatory practice for a person to by force or threat of force, knowingly injure, intimidate or interfere with or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to such other person by the constitution or laws of the United States, the constitution or laws of this state, or by local law, or by this chapter, when such injury, intimidation, interference, or threat is motivated, in whole or in part, by the actual or perceived group identity of the other person or because of such person's actual or perceived status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or stalking. For example, the amendment will prohibit interfering with a person's right to the enjoyment of their home or residence, or to utilize and enjoy public transportation free from threats, intimidation, harassment, coercion or violence because of the person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class. The amendment will enable the Commission to award compensatory damages, punitive damages, civil monetary penalties, reasonable attorney's fees, and seek equitable relief where appropriate. The amendment will work to increase the reporting of hate incidents, which will assist law enforcement in developing

mitigation strategies to address violations of the Human Rights Law, as well as inform the work of the Commission. The proposed amendment will not, however, be construed to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of any person, as this legislation is meant to address discriminatory harassment only.

Your Committee is further advised that the proposed local law will also amend the penalty section of the Human Rights Law by: (1) adding civil monetary penalties for commission of unlawful discriminatory practices; (2) removing the limit of \$10,000 for punitive damages; and (3) authorizing the requirement for a respondent to undertake remedial action, including, but not limited to, training and community service for violations of the law.

Your committee is informed that the proposed project does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning, dated May 14, 2021, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators. Your Committee concurs in this conclusion.

Your Committee, after careful consideration, recommends adoption of this Local
Law.

Dated: _____, 2021
White Plains, New York

COMMITTEE ON

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Discriminatory Harrasment Law

NO FISCAL IMPACT PROJECTED

OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT

To Be Completed by Submitting Department and Reviewed by Budget

SECTION A - FUND

GENERAL FUND

AIRPORT FUND

SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUND

SECTION B - EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Total Current Year Expense _____

Total Current Year Revenue _____

Source of Funds (check one): Current Appropriations Transfer of Existing Appropriations

Additional Appropriations

Other (Revenue)

Identify Accounts: _____

Potential Related Operating Budget Expenses: Annual Amount _____

Describe: _____

Potential Related Operating Budget Revenues: Annual Amount _____

Describe: Potential civil penalties paid to the County

Anticipated Savings to County and/or Impact on Department Operations:

Current Year: _____

Next Four Years: _____

Prepared by: Michael Dunn

Title: Assistant Budget Analyst

Department: Budget

Date: June 4, 2021

Reviewed By: 

Budget Director

Date: 6/4/21

RESOLUTION NO. ____ – 2021

RESOLVED, that this Board hold a public hearing pursuant to Section 209.141(4) of the Laws of Westchester County on Local Law Intro. No. ____ - 2021, entitled “A LOCAL LAW amending Chapter 700 to the Laws of Westchester County relating to Discriminatory Harassment.” The public hearing will be held at __.m. on the ____ day of _____, 2021 in the Chambers of the Board of Legislators, 8th Floor, Michaelian Office Building, White Plains, New York. The Clerk of the Board shall cause notice of the time and date of such hearing to be published at least once in one or more newspapers published in the County of Westchester and selected by the Clerk of the Board for that purpose in the manner and time required by law.