**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 1‑13‑90, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS, HEARINGS, AND ORDERS INVOLVING AN EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION VIOLATION BY THE STATE HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION, SO AS TO REVISE THE PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO COMPLAINTS INVOLVING A COVERED STATE AGENCY OR DEPARTMENT OR SUBDIVISIONS OR PARTS OF AN AGENCY OR DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING A REQUIREMENT FOR PRELIMINARY MEDIATION CONFERENCES CONCERNING THESE COMPLAINTS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 1‑13‑90(c) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 387 of 2006, is further amended to read:

“(c) For complaints asserting expressly or in substance a violation by a state agency or department or local subdivisions of a state agency or department of Section 1‑13‑80 the procedure ~~shall~~ must be as follows:

~~(1) The Commissioner shall assign one or more of his employees or agents to investigate the complaint, in which case one shall be designated the investigator in charge of the complaint. Information gathered during an investigation under this subsection shall not be made public by the Commission, its officers or employees, except for information made public as a result of being offered or received into evidence in an action brought under this subsection.~~

~~(2) The Chairman of the Commission or, upon the request of the Chairman, the Commissioner shall designate a member of the Commission to supervise the processing of the complaint.~~

~~(3) The complaint may be resolved at any time before a hearing by conference, conciliation and persuasion with the complainant and the respondent, such resolution to be embodied in a conciliation agreement, which shall include an agreement by the respondent to refrain from committing unlawful discriminatory practices in the future, and which may contain such further provisions as are agreed upon by the complainant and the respondent. No conciliation agreement shall be deemed an effective resolution by the Commission unless the supervisory commission member shall have reviewed and approved the terms thereof. Positions taken by a witness in connection with such efforts toward conciliation shall not be made public or used against the interest of the witness in a subsequent proceeding.~~

~~(4) In undertaking its investigation of a complaint the Commission shall have the authority:~~

~~(i) To issue a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum and thereby compel attendance of witnesses or production for examination of books, papers, and records, whenever it is deemed necessary to compel the attendance of witnesses, or the production for examination of any books, payrolls, personnel records, correspondence, documents, papers or any other evidence relating to any matter under investigation or in question before the Commission. The power may be exercised only by the joint action by the Chairman of the Commission and the Commissioner.~~

~~(ii) To require any party or witness to answer interrogatories at any time after the complaint is filed.~~

~~(iii) To take depositions of witnesses including any party pursuant to a complaint or investigation made by the Commission.~~

~~(iv) Pursuant to subitems (i), (ii), (iii), above, if a person fails to permit access, fails to comply with a subpoena, refuses to have his or her deposition taken, refuses to answer interrogatories, or otherwise refuses to allow discovery, the Commission may request an order of a court of competent jurisdiction requiring discovery and other related good faith compliance.~~

~~(5) If not sooner resolved, the investigator shall upon completion of his investigation submit to the supervisory commission member a statement of the facts disclosed by his investigation and recommend either that the complaint be dismissed or that a panel of commission members be designated to hear the complaint. The supervisory commission member, after review of the case file and the statement and recommendation of the investigator shall issue an order either of dismissal or for a hearing, which order shall not be subject to judicial or other further review.~~

~~(6) If the order be of dismissal, the supervisory commission member shall mail a copy of the order to the complainant and the respondent at their last known addresses.~~

~~(7) If the order be for a hearing, the supervisory commission member shall annex thereto a notice and a copy of the complaint and require the respondent to answer the complaint at a hearing at a time and place specified in the notice and shall serve upon the respondent a copy of the order, the complaint, and the notice.~~

~~(8) At any time before a hearing a complaint may be amended by the supervisory commission member upon the request of the investigator or of the complainant or of the respondent. Complaints may be amended during a hearing only upon a majority vote of the panel of commission members for such hearing.~~

~~(9) Upon request by any party, the Commissioner shall issue appropriate subpoenaes or subpoenaes duces tecum to any witnesses or other custodians of documents desired to be present at the hearing, or at prehearing depositions, unless the Commissioner determines that issuance of the subpoenaes or subpoenaes duces tecum would be unreasonable or unduly burdensome.~~

~~(10) Upon notification by any party that any party or witness has failed to permit access, failed to comply with a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum, refused to have his or her deposition taken, refused to answer interrogatories, or otherwise refused to allow discovery, the Commission, shall, upon notice to the party or witness, apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order requiring discovery and other good faith compliance unless the Commission determines that the discovery would be unreasonably or unduly burdensome.~~

~~(11) Upon request by the supervisory commission member, the Chairman of the Commission shall designate a panel of three members of the Commission to sit as the Commission to hear the complaint; provided, that no member of the Commission shall be a member of a panel to hear a complaint for which he has been a supervisory commission member.~~

~~(12) At any hearing held pursuant to this subsection, the case in support of the complaint shall be presented before the panel by one or more of the commission’s employees or agents, and, with consent of the panel, by legal representatives of the complaining party; provided, that endeavors at conciliation by the investigator shall not be received into evidence nor otherwise made known to the members of the panel.~~

~~(13) The respondent shall submit a written answer to the complaint and appear at such hearing in person or by counsel and may submit evidence. The respondent shall have the power reasonably and fairly to amend his answer.~~

~~(14) The complainant shall be permitted to be present and submit evidence.~~

~~(15) Proceedings under this section shall be subject to the Administrative Procedures Act, Sections 1‑23‑310 through 1‑23‑400 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and in case of conflict between the provisions of this chapter and the Administrative Procedures Act, the Administrative Procedures Act shall govern. A recording of the proceedings shall be made, which may be subsequently transcribed upon request and payment of a reasonable fee by the complainant or the respondent. The fee shall be set by the Commission or upon motion of the panel, in which case copies of such transcription shall be made available to the complainant or the respondent upon request and payment of a reasonable fee to be set by the Commission.~~

~~(16) If upon all the evidence at the hearing the panel shall find that the respondent has engaged in any unlawful discriminatory practice, it shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the respondent in the name of the Commission an opinion and order requiring that such unlawful discriminatory practice be discontinued and requiring such other action including, but not limited to, hiring, reinstatement or upgrading of employees, with or without back pay to the persons aggrieved by such practice as, in the judgment of the panel, will effectuate the purposes of this chapter. Back pay liability shall not accrue from a date more than two years prior to the filing of a charge with the Commission. The Commission may retain jurisdiction of any such case until it is satisfied of compliance by the respondent with its order.~~

~~(17) If upon all the evidence at the hearing the panel shall find that the respondent has not engaged in any such unlawful discriminatory practice, the panel shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the complainant and the respondent an opinion and order dismissing the complaint as to the respondent.~~

~~(18) A copy of the opinion and order of the Commission shall be delivered in all cases to the Attorney General and to such other public officers as the Commission deems proper. Copies of the opinion and order shall be available to the public for inspection upon request, and copies shall be made available to any person upon payment of a reasonable fee set by the Commission.~~

~~(19)(i) If an application for review is made to the commission within fourteen days from the date the order of the commission is given, the commission, for good cause shown, shall review the order and evidence, receive further evidence, rehear the parties or their representatives, and, if proper, amend the order.~~

~~(ii) The order of the commission, as provided in item (16) of subsection (c) of this section, if not reviewed in due time, or an order of the commission upon review, as provided for in subitem (i) of item (19) of this subsection, is conclusive and binding as to all questions of fact unless clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantive evidence in the whole record. Either party to the dispute, within thirty days after receipt of notice to be sent by registered mail of the order may appeal the decision of the commission to the Administrative Law Court as provided in Sections 1‑23‑380(B) and 1‑23‑600(D). In case of an appeal from the decision of the commission, the appeal operates as a supersedeas for thirty days only, unless otherwise ordered by the administrative law judge, and the respondent is required to comply with the order involved in the appeal or certification until the questions at issue are fully determined in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.~~

~~(iii) The commission may institute a proceeding for enforcement of its order of item (16) of subsection (c) of this section, or its amended order of subitem (i) of item (19) of this subsection after thirty days from the date of the order, by filing a notice of appeal in the court of common pleas of the county in which the hearing occurred, or where a person required in the order to cease and desist from a practice which is the subject of the commission’s order, or to take other affirmative action, resides, or transacts business.~~

~~If no appeal pursuant to subitem (ii) of item (19) of this subsection is initiated, the commission may obtain a decree of the court for enforcement of its order upon a showing that a copy of the petition for enforcement was served upon the party subject to the dictates of the commission’s order.~~

(1) Within sixty days of the complainant’s filing of the complaint, the commissioner shall assign one or more of his employees or agents to hold a mandatory mediation conference. The mandatory mediation conference may not be used as a fact‑finding conference. The mediator may hold additional mediation conferences to accommodate settlement discussions.

(2) If the complaint is not resolved after the mandatory mediation conference, the complainant or the respondent may request the commission to hold additional mediation conferences.

(3) The commission may dismiss the complaint if a complainant, after notice and without good cause, fails to attend a mandatory mediation conference, or the respondent has eliminated the discriminatory practice complained of, taken steps to prevent a like occurrence in the future, and offered full relief to the complainant, even though the complainant has refused the relief.

(4) If the complaint is not resolved after the mandatory mediation conference, the commissioner shall assign one or more of the agency’s employees or agents within fifteen days after the mandatory mediation conference to investigate the complaint as the designated investigator in charge of the complaint. Information gathered during an investigation under this item shall not be made public by the commission, its officers, or employees, except for information made public as a result of being offered or received into evidence in an action brought under this chapter.

(5) The chairman of the commission or, upon the request of the chairman, the commissioner shall designate a member of the commission to supervise the processing of the complaint.

(6) The complaint may be resolved at any time before a hearing by conference, conciliation, or persuasion, with the complainant and the respondent. The resolution must be embodied in a conciliation agreement, which shall include an agreement by the respondent to refrain from committing unlawful discriminatory practices in the future, and which may contain those further provisions as are agreed upon by the complainant and the respondent. No conciliation agreement may be considered an effective resolution by the commission unless the supervisory commission member has reviewed and approved the terms of the agreement. Positions taken by a witness in connection with these efforts toward conciliation shall not be made public or used against the interest of the witness in a subsequent proceeding.

(7) In undertaking its investigation of a complaint, the commission shall have the authority:

(a) to issue a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum and thereby compel attendance of witnesses or production for examination of books, papers, and records, whenever it is considered necessary to compel the attendance of witnesses, or the production for examination of any books, payrolls, personnel records, correspondence, documents, papers, or any other evidence relating to any matter under investigation or in question before the commission. This authority may be exercised only by the joint action by the chairman of the commission and the commissioner;

(b) to require any party or witness to answer interrogatories at any time after the complaint is filed;

(c) to take depositions of witnesses including any party pursuant to a complaint or investigation made by the commission;

(d) pursuant to subitems (a), (b), (c), if a person fails to permit access, fails to comply with a subpoena, refuses to have his deposition taken, refuses to answer interrogatories, or otherwise refuses to allow discovery, the commission may request an order of a court of competent jurisdiction requiring discovery and other related good faith compliance.

(8) If not sooner resolved, the investigator shall upon completion of his investigation submit to the supervisory commission member a statement of the facts disclosed by his investigation and recommend either that the complaint be dismissed or that a panel of commission members be designated to hear the complaint. The supervisory commission member, after review of the case file and the statement and recommendation of the investigator, shall issue an order either of dismissal or for a hearing, which order is not subject to judicial or other further review.

(9) If the order is for dismissal, the supervisory commission member shall mail a copy of the order to the complainant and the respondent at their last known addresses.

(10) If the order is for a hearing, the supervisory commission member shall attach to the order a notice and a copy of the complaint and require the respondent to answer the complaint at a hearing at a time and place specified in the notice and shall serve upon the respondent a copy of the order, the complaint, and the notice.

(11) At any time before a hearing a complaint may be amended by the supervisory commission member upon the request of the investigator, complainant, or respondent. Complaints may be amended during a hearing only upon a majority vote of the panel of commission members for the hearing.

(12) Upon request by any party, the commissioner shall issue appropriate subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum to any witnesses or other custodians of documents desired to be present at the hearing, or at prehearing depositions, unless the commissioner determines that issuance of the subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum would be unreasonable or unduly burdensome.

(13) Upon notification by any party that any party or witness has failed to permit access, failed to comply with a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum, refused to have his deposition taken, refused to answer interrogatories, or otherwise refused to allow discovery, the commission, upon notice to the party or witness, shall apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order requiring discovery and other good faith compliance unless the commission determines that the discovery would be unreasonably or unduly burdensome.

(14) Upon request by the supervisory commission member, the chairman of the commission shall designate a panel of three members of the commission to sit as the commission to hear the complaint; provided, that no member of the commission may be a member of a panel to hear a complaint for which he has been a supervisory commission member.

(15) At any hearing held pursuant to this subsection, the case in support of the complaint shall be presented before the panel by one or more of the commission’s employees or agents, and, with consent of the panel, by legal representatives of the complaining party; provided, that attempts at conciliation by the investigator must not be received into evidence nor otherwise made known to the members of the panel.

(16) The respondent shall submit a written answer to the complaint and appear at the hearing in person or by counsel and may submit evidence. The respondent shall have the power reasonably and fairly to amend his answer.

(17) The complainant is permitted to be present and submit evidence.

(18) These proceedings are subject to the Administrative Procedures Act and in case of conflict between the provisions of this chapter and the Administrative Procedures Act, the Administrative Procedures Act shall govern. A recording of the proceedings shall be made, which may be subsequently transcribed upon request and payment of a reasonable fee by the complainant or the respondent. The fee must be set by the commission or upon motion of the panel, in which case copies of this transcription shall be made available to the complainant or the respondent upon request and payment of a reasonable fee to be set by the commission.

(19) If upon all the evidence presented at the hearing the panel shall find that the respondent has engaged in any unlawful discriminatory practice, it shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the respondent in the name of the commission an opinion and order requiring that the unlawful discriminatory practice be discontinued and requiring such other action including, but not limited to, hiring, reinstating or upgrading of employees, with or without back pay to the persons aggrieved by the practice as, in the judgment of the panel, shall effectuate the purposes of this chapter. Back pay liability shall not accrue from a date more than two years prior to the filing of the complaint with the commission. The commission may retain jurisdiction of any such case until it is satisfied of compliance by the respondent with its order.

(20) If upon all the evidence at the hearing the panel shall find that the respondent has not engaged in any unlawful discriminatory practice, the panel shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the complainant and the respondent an opinion and order dismissing the complaint as to the respondent.

(21) A copy of the opinion and order of the commission shall be delivered to the Attorney General and to those other public officers as the commission deems proper. Copies of the opinion and order shall be available to the public for inspection upon request, and copies shall be made available to any person upon payment of a reasonable fee set by the commission.

(22)(a) If an application for review is made to the commission within fourteen days from the date of the opinion and order of the commission, the commission, for good cause shown, shall review the opinion and order, the evidence, receive further evidence, rehear the parties or their representatives, and, if justified, amend the opinion and order.

(b) The opinion and order of the commission as provided in item (19), if not reviewed in due time, or an opinion and order of the commission upon review, as provided for in subitem (a), is conclusive and binding as to all questions of fact unless clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantive evidence in the whole record. Either party to the dispute, within thirty days after receipt of the opinion and order, may appeal the decision of the commission to the Administrative Law Court as provided in Chapter 23, Title 1. In case of an appeal from the decision of the commission, the appeal operates as a supersedeas for thirty days only, unless otherwise ordered by the administrative law judge, and the respondent is required to comply with the order involved in the appeal until the questions at issue are fully determined in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(c) The commission may institute a proceeding for enforcement of its order issued under item (19) or its amended order issued under subitem (a) after thirty days from the date of the order, unless otherwise prevented by the administrative law judge under subitem (b) above, by filing a request for enforcement in the court of common pleas of the county in which the hearing occurred, or where the person who is the subject of the commission’s order resides or transacts business.

A decree of the court for enforcement of the order may be granted upon a showing that a copy of the petition for enforcement was served upon the party subject to the dictates of the commission’s order.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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