

COMMISSION ON RACE & ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Minutes

August 26, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The third meeting of the Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity was held on August 26, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Kevin Jackson, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Kevin Jackson, Co-Chair; Senators Karen Berg, Keturah J. Herron, and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives George Brown Jr., Samara Heavrin, and Nima Kulkarni; Evon Smith and Katima Smith-Willis.

Guests: Singer Buchanan, Executive Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Contract Compliance (EEOCC), Finance and Administration Cabinet; and Tony Youssefi, Office for Civil Rights and Small Business Development, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).

LRC Staff: Brandon White and Logan Schaaf.

Approval of June Minutes

The minutes of the June 24, 2025, meeting were approved.

Small Business Government Contracts

Singer Buchanan, Executive Director, EEOCC, Finance and Administration Cabinet, and Tony Youssefi, Office for Civil Rights and Small Business Development, KYTC, discussed the mission and programs of the EEOCC and KYTC's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program.

Mr. Buchanan highlighted the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Certification Program and the Minority and Women Business Enterprise Certification Program. He discussed common issues facing vendors, including limited access to capital and lending partners, and a lack of awareness regarding the certification process.

Responding to Chair Jackson, Mr. Buchanan said the EEOCC has three employees. Chair Jackson praised their efforts but noted that it can be difficult to spread the word on EEOCC programs across the state with relatively limited resources.

Responding to Representative Brown, Mr. Buchanan said the EEOCC follows state law and does not anticipate issues with federal legislation, because the office does not receive federal funding.

Mr. Youssefi provided an overview of the DBE Program, which seeks to ensure nondiscrimination and promote access for disadvantaged businesses, and applies to transportation contracts funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation. He discussed the program's background, its core objectives, eligibility requirements, and certification process. Mr. Youssefi also highlighted protections in contracting, monitoring and compliance oversight, barriers faced by DBEs, and DBE supportive services.

Responding to Chair Jackson, Mr. Youssefi outlined how someone can apply for the DBE Program.

Responding to Ms. Smith-Willis, Mr. Youssefi discussed ways KYTC assists people and businesses in navigating the DBE process.

Responding to Chair Jackson, Mr. Youssefi said if a prime contractor fails to use or pay a DBE after agreeing to do so, it can result in loss of credit, breach of contract penalties, or federal sanctions. He also said, in the past five years, they have not issued a contract for a pilot program for greater opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses.

Responding to Representative Heavrin, Mr. Youssefi said he is unable to comment on an ongoing federal lawsuit relating to DBE contracts.

Responding to Chair Jackson, Mr. Youssefi said if there is a discrepancy in final pay between prime contractors and DBEs, they notify the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Adjournment

With no further business before the commission, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 PM.