



## **THE FLORIDA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**

### **Public Comment and Conduct of Meetings Policy and Procedures**

#### **Policy Statement**

It is the intent of this policy that the deliberations and actions of the Florida Commission on Human Relations (Commission) be conducted in such manner that the public and relevant stakeholders may be fully informed and intelligently advised as to the conduct of public business.

Under Florida law, the public must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to provide input on public matters before the Commission for official action. The Commission has the authority to reasonably regulate public input by establishing time limit restrictions on public comments and enforce orderly, non-disruptive conduct at public meetings. These public participation and decorum rules provide the parameters for such regulation.

#### **Citizen Participation Procedures**

- A. The following rules and procedures apply to citizen participation during Commission meetings, including committee meetings, group meetings, workshops, etc.
- B. General Procedures.
  - 1. Official Commission meetings will be held in person at the location identified on the advertised meeting agenda, or virtually via the URL link provided in the agenda.
  - 2. Anyone wishing to speak in person before the Commission at any meeting must:
    - a. **At least 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting**, register to speak by submitting a completed Appearance Form to the Clerk. The forms will be available on the Commission's website or from the Clerk at each meeting. The Appearance Form must:
      - i. Indicate what agenda item the person intends to speak for or against; or
      - ii. Whether the person is providing public information on an agenda item and identifying the agenda item.

- b. When a Speaker's name is called, the Speaker will approach the public lectern (if in person), or unmute themselves (if virtual), and give the following information in an audible tone of voice for the minutes:
    - i. Their name;
    - ii. Their address; and
    - iii. If requested by the Chair, information on whether the Speaker speaks for a group of persons or a third party or represents an organization. If the person represents an organization, the Speaker must also state whether the view expressed by the Speaker represents an established policy or position approved by the organization, and whether the person is being compensated by the organization.
3. If a Speaker is no longer present in the meeting room or in virtual attendance at the time they are recognized, the Speaker forfeits the opportunity to speak and is prohibited from transferring the time to a different individual.
4. If a Speaker chooses to appear virtually by means of telephone, video conferencing, or other technology, **it is the sole responsibility of the Speaker** to ensure that they have the appropriate technology to do so. Public Appearance Forms can be obtained on the Commission's website or from the Clerk and **must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. (ET) the day before the meeting** to the Clerk. The Clerk can be contacted by email at [clerk@fchr.myflorida.com](mailto:clerk@fchr.myflorida.com) or by calling 850-907-6785. If, at the time they are recognized, the Speaker cannot be heard by the Board due to poor telephone reception, poor internet reception or other technology errors, excessive background noise or interference, or other issues, the Speaker forfeits the opportunity to speak and is prohibited from transferring the time to a different individual.
5. Groups of five or more individuals who wish to express their views collectively shall select one Speaker to represent the group's views to the board. The group's time is still limited to the applicable time allotment.

C. Visual or Electronic Aids and Handouts.

1. For public safety purposes, no signs or placards mounted on sticks, posts, poles, or similar structures will be allowed in Commission meeting rooms.
2. Visual aids that disrupt meetings or interfere with others' ability to view or

participate in the meeting will likewise not be allowed.

3. Handouts the Speaker wishes to share with the Commission must be provided in advance of the meeting or presented to the Commission Clerk along with the Appearance Form. A copy of any visual aid or electronic aid a Speaker wishes to publicly present before the Commission must be provided in advance of the public meeting, along with a written request explaining the necessity of the visual aid or electronic aid.
4. The Chair may approve or deny such a request at the Chair's discretion.
5. Electronic aids must be properly audible or observable to all members of the Commission and the public, cannot require extensive set-up, and may not be disruptive. At the Chair's discretion, set-up time may be counted as part of the Speaker's allotted time.
6. All content must be the Speaker's own. In no event will a Speaker be authorized to display or present any visual or audio content recorded or taken from the internet, social media, television, radio, or other forms of media—including but not limited to videos, music, speech, sounds, or images—created, posted, streamed, owned, copyrighted, trademarked, or presented by any party other than the Speaker.

The Chair may immediately interrupt and terminate a Speaker's speaking privilege for violation of this provision.

#### D. Authorized Time for Public Comment.

1. Time for public comment will be allocated as follows:
  - a. A citizen may speak on an agenda item and is authorized to speak for **up to two (2) minutes**.
  - b. Public comment must be on a specific agenda item or non-ministerial actions of the Commission. Time will be allotted for registered Speakers prior to the Commission voting on that item.
2. The Chair or the Commission's presiding officer has the discretion to limit the remarks of each Speaker to **less than two (2) minutes** based upon the number of individuals registered to speak, in order to allow more Speakers to be heard.

#### E. Special Circumstances.

1. The Commission is not required to take public comment for:

- a. Emergency situations affecting public health, welfare, or safety if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Commission to act;
  - b. Ministerial acts such as approval of minutes or ceremonial proclamations;
  - c. Meetings exempt or excepted from section 286.011, Florida Statutes; or
  - d. Meetings, such as workshop meetings, at which no votes will be taken.
2. The Commission Chair may waive any of these procedures in their discretion.

### **Citizen Decorum Guidelines**

- A. Public participation at Commission meetings is intended to allow individual members of the public to address the Commission on matters before the Commission. The Chair is responsible for maintaining a respectful environment during public participation so that public comments can be heard and considered by the Commission. Therefore, the Commission Chair may interrupt or terminate any individual's speaking privilege if the Speaker's comments, attire, visual aids, electronic aids, or demeanor constitute a personal attack; are slanderous, defaming, disruptive, or obscene; violate any law (including but not limited to copyright and intellectual property laws); or otherwise are in violation of this policy. The following guidelines apply to any public comment at Commission meetings:
  1. Speakers must be respectful of the Commission, Commission staff, other members of the public, and others' opinions, and refrain from making personal attacks upon any person.
  2. No slander, defamation, abusive, or impertinent comments will be allowed as part of any presentation to the Commission.
  3. Presentations to the Commission must relate to an agenda item which pertains to the Commission's governmental activities.
  4. Speakers should make their comments concise and to the point, presenting relevant information they wish the Commission to consider.
  5. All remarks must be addressed to the Commission as a body and not to any individual member of the Commission or staff of the Commission.
  6. No person, other than a member of the Commission and the Speaker then authorized to speak, may be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through a member of the Commission, without permission of the Chair.
  7. A Speaker's time is an opportunity to direct comments to the Commission; it is

not intended to be and will not be permitted to become a question-and-answer session.

8. Any Speaker who becomes disorderly or who fails to confine remarks to the identified subject or business at hand or who otherwise violates this policy may be given a verbal warning by the Chair. Following such a warning, the Speaker may continue, provided that they do so in accordance with this policy. If, after such a warning the Speaker fails to comply with this policy, the Speaker may be directed to end their comments. If the Speaker does not do so, they may be subject to removal from the meeting room. The Chair may bar any person failing to comply with this policy after receiving and ignoring a warning from making any additional comments during the meeting, unless permission to continue, or to address the Commission again, is granted by the majority of the Commission members present. In extreme circumstances, a Speaker or other person who has caused significant disruption or disruption on more than one occasion may be barred from attendance at future Commission meetings for a time period to be determined by a majority of the Commission.
9. Clapping, applauding, heckling or verbal outbursts in support of or in opposition to a Speaker or their remarks is discouraged. Any such activity that becomes disruptive may result in removal from the meeting.

July 2025