

INTRODUCTION

Treasurer Goldberg.

As you know, I was forced to go to court in the hope that I might be given a meaningful opportunity to be heard about the false and meritless allegations that have been made about me, including by anonymous sources.

I had hoped that this meeting would occur before any action was taken against me and before my name was dragged publicly through the mud by false statements and leaks about me. And, most importantly, I hoped that at some point in this difficult process you would recall the history behind your appointment of me, what it was you asked me to do as the appointed Chair of the Commission, and why you asked me to do it. My hopes, however, were in vain.

I sit before you having already been castigated publicly and privately, and unfairly. But, here we are, this is a private forum that does not provide me the ability to face my accusers. As you know, it is more than a little awkward to have you bringing accusations against me while you also sit in judgement of my actions. Nevertheless I intend to do my best to at least put on the record the true facts about my appointment, my efforts to carry out the charge you gave to me, and expose and answer the meritless nature of the allegations which you seek to rely upon in firing me even though none of them provide any statutorily allowed basis for my termination.

A. You Hired Me as a Change Agent and to Clean House

As you recall, in the summer of 2022, you asked me to apply to be Chair of the Cannabis Control Commission. You told me you received resumes from a number of talented candidates, including several diverse candidates. You told me you would extend the application deadline to give me enough time to apply for the job, **because you told me you were not satisfied that the pool of applicants met the criteria for Chair under G.L. ch. 10, § 76.**

You also told me you were not happy with how the Commission was being managed, and you indicated that you wanted someone with my skill set to come in to make rapid improvements and change. This was the second time in about 10 months that you had asked me to take on an assignment to provide leadership to promote social equity.

Initially I was skeptical. I did not seek out this position. I was not sure that I wanted to put myself back in the sometimes harsh public limelight. I told you I had previously been involved with cannabis licensees and you told me that was actually a plus. After reflection, I determined that filling this role would be consistent with my decades long record of serving the citizens of the Commonwealth, to again help expand economic opportunities across the state. I believed, as I thought you did, that this role would provide me the opportunity to leverage my experience as a change agent to make improvements in an obviously troubled state agency.

B. You Know I Am a Change Agent That is Not Afraid to Speak Out and Expose Issues.

As you know, I dedicated a large portion of my life to public service in the Commonwealth. I held the office that you hold now. I served in the State House of Representatives and Senate. I've worked with persons from diverse backgrounds, all in a continued effort to better the lives of citizens of the Commonwealth. I was the Democratic nominee for Governor.

Shortly after I became State Treasurer, I helped uncover widespread corruption inside the Unpaid Check fund. Because of poor oversight and a system lacking internal controls, \$9 million dollars had been stolen through a scheme led by state employees. Within months of being sworn in, I worked quickly to restore the public's confidence that public funds were being protected. I built a new professional team and created new rules of operation to fix the systemic weaknesses in that department.

Shortly after that, at my direction, an independent audit uncovered the fact that Lottery employees were stealing significant sums of money from that agency as well. At PRIM, a separate audit at my direction revealed that the Commonwealth had missed nearly a billion dollars in unfunded liability that had previously gone unaccounted for. You may also recall that the then governor's team had repeatedly announced that the multi-billion dollar Big Dig highway construction project was "on time and on budget". At great potential political risk to my reputation, I became a whistleblower who forced the administration to come clean about \$2 billion in hidden cost overruns.

I've never been afraid to bring issues to light at my own personal risk. I always stood for truth so the citizens could have faith in their government. That is why New York State Comptroller Tom Dinapoli, asked me to chair a pension reform commission in the wake of public corruption at that agency. I thought that my record for integrity and strong management is why you asked me to Chair the CCC.

C. After Chair Hoffman Left You Knew What You Were Getting Me Into

The CCC has become an agency beset by a toxic internal work culture. You are well-aware of the mutiny that forced Steven Hoffman out as Chair. Shawn Collins has bragged to many that he "got rid of Hoffman". Your Deputy Sarah Kim served as Acting Chair immediately after Hoffman's departure. I came in following this. You knew about the problems that existed within the agency you asked me to lead, which is why I believed you appointed me to fix them.

It is well known that the CCC's toxic culture has resulted in the weaponization of false human resources claims because of personality differences. The CCC was plagued with fiefdoms fighting for power and using the HR process to take control. This has not only usurped the statutory directive calling for the Chair to exercise control over all administration of the Commission, but caused immense and unnecessary costs to the CCC. Top staff have seen this culture and many have chosen to just leave. The toxic culture handicaps the CCC from doing what it is supposed to do – and is a direct result of Shawn Collin's failed leadership by his refusing to address this internal chaos and hold people accountable.

D. Issues at the CCC

i. Examples of the CCC Failing to Meet its Mission

It is no secret that the CCC is an organization that has been failing to meet its mission. Most troubling to me, is it has failed in one of its central responsibilities: promoting access to a lucrative industry for persons who had been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs as well as other targeted groups such as persons of color, women, LGBTQ, disabled and veterans. Over 900 people have gone through our Social Equity Program. Of the approximately 600 active cannabis businesses, only 60 are Social Equity participants, and fewer than 30 licenses are held by persons of color. I have spent a great deal of time attempting to find options to address this failure, only to receive pushback from staff who think no change is needed, but this failure should not be allowed to continue.

Multiple news headlines have exposed dysfunction at the CCC. Licensees have directly told me that they are fearful of retribution from CCC staff. The CCC's failures to ensure accurate testing standards have led to threats to the public's safety using cannabis products. A toxic internal culture has resulted in harm to multiple women who have suffered outrageous acts of discrimination and even threats of violence that have gone unaddressed and ignored by CCC's former Human Resources Department and the former Executive Director, Shawn Collins. The death of a cannabis worker was purposefully hidden from commissioners at Collins' direction, and still no action has been taken to establish an anonymous whistleblower system that might expose the potential for harm before it can take a life.

The CCC suffered the departure of its general counsel as well as highly skilled members of the legal team throughout 2022 and 2023. Other staff have left because they don't want to deal with the side issues or they feel marginalized or harassed. In August of 2023, after the legislature passed Ch. 180 to promote social equity opportunities and clarify the HCA post community application process, we had a big job to do. However, we did not have enough experienced regulatory writers to do it as quickly as we had announced to the public would do. After the general counsel left, Collins became both the Executive Director and Acting General Counsel. He rarely attended weekly meetings of the legal team. Collins provided ineffective guidance as we addressed important regulatory drafting that had a specific focus on promoting social equity.

For at least two years, Collins made it abundantly clear to all the commissioners and staff that he had one foot out the door, stating he was burnt out and not happy dealing with the management issues that had festered. During our first meeting, he told me that he was going to leave in early 2023. He told me he was interviewing for a job and was in active conversations with other former Cannabis Executive Directors developing a plan to start a consulting business writing cannabis regulations. He wasn't MIA for the two weeks after the birth of his daughter, he was MIA for months, leaving the organization without the strong leadership it needed during a critical time.

During the fall of 2022 and winter of 2023, multiple news headlines focused on the growing operational dysfunctionality at the CCC. Collins' growing detachment from his leadership role was exposed in these negative stories. As a result of these public failures, legislators filed a bill calling for an audit of the CCC. Another bill was filed to place an Inspector General within the commission

to maintain transparent and unbiased operation within the organization. The Inspector General's office launched an investigation of the CCC, which remains pending, and I believe the auditor is doing so as well.

ii. The Staff is Openly Insubordinate to the Chair and Commissioners.

The CCC's enabling statute clearly states "The chair **shall have and exercise supervision and control over all the affairs of the commission**. The chair shall preside at all hearings at which the chair is present and shall designate a commissioner to act as chair in the chair's absence. To promote efficiency in administration, the chair shall make such division or re-division of the work of the commission among the commissioners as the chair deems expedient." Our enabling statute was consistently ignored by many at the CCC and those outside, including some of your staff. For example, the Comptroller determined that Shawn Collins undermined the statutory authority of the Commissioners when he inappropriately appointed an acting Executive Director in September 2023.

Shawn Collins and his senior staff have consistently ignored the lines of authority outlined by the statute and ignored the Org. Chart. The Executive Director's job description is clear: the Executive Director reports to the Chair. In practice, the description couldn't be further from how the place operated. For the first five months, Collins refused to regularly meet with me as I requested. He rarely came to the office, so in-person meetings could not happen. He used the staff he controlled to undermine me and lodge false accusations to force me out. Last October the Boston Globe wrote an editorial detailing multiple troubling problems within the CCC. It expressed shock about commissioners being kept in the dark about the death of cannabis worker Lorna McMurray. In the wake of that story, Collins apologized to commissioners for the "oversight" but we later found out that he purposefully directed senior staff to hide this tragedy from his appointing authority. The Globe headline got it right when it stated - the tail WAS wagging the dog, and I knew this situation needed to change in order to protect the public.

The Chair is supposed to represent the other members of the Commission to provide a single voice of supervision over the Executive Director. Collins chastised me noting that the Chair did not hold any special authority, I was one of five co-equal commissioners who were all his boss. He had also begun to direct and assign the work of my fellow commissioners in clear violation of my statutory authority. He leveraged the restrictions of the open meeting law to undermine the collective power of all five commissioners by going independently to each commissioner and when we were prevented from talking to one another.

iii. Unequal Treatment of Women

Collins allowed a culture of misogyny to flourish. Senior male staff at the CCC have been allowed to harass women and these male staff members were not held accountable.

I have become aware that a senior staff member created a hostile work environment harming at least five women-including women of color-who reported this disturbing behavior to HR, and to Collins. Collins repeatedly failed to hold this senior staff member accountable for his behavior.

E. I Did Exactly What You Asked Me to Do.

I did what you requested me to do. In only a year, I was making progress to create new opportunities for entrepreneurs of color; capricious and hefty fines that were intended to pad the CCC's budget dropped precipitously, and I was making progress in establishing an anonymous whistleblower system. Supporting the work of Commissioner Roy, I was convening groups to address the issue of weak oversight of cannabis testing, and I brought together multiple agencies to address the problem of unregulated THC laced hemp drinks. If I had been allowed to continue doing the job you asked me to do, who knows how far along the CCC would be today to promote social equity and support economic opportunity. Many issues have languished over the past 8 months, including a failure to create a regulatory framework for social consumption sites. This is a special license that would offer one more exclusive opportunity for social equity applicants to pursue in this industry. Nothing has happened in the past year to push this issue forward.

I tried to change the culture at the CCC. I held people accountable. While some chafe at being held accountable, setting clear goals and assessing progress toward a goal is what drives real improvement. That is what I believed you wanted. In response to my desire to demand accountability, rather than embracing needed change, employees made up false allegations to remove me just as they did to Chair Hoffman, bringing false accusations against him so that he would leave.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

A. Accusations of Racially Insensitive Behavior

I was not allowed to have an attorney present when the First Investigator interviewed me. I was not allowed to record the interviews, nor did First Investigator. You've heard her testify. She was cagey, refused to answer basic questions and still will not identify all of the witnesses that you and she are relying on.

i. That Commissioner Camargo Was Not Qualified to Serve as Chair

I never said either publicly or privately that Commissioner Camargo was not qualified to be Chair. **That was you.** She was appointed to a different Commissioner role than I was based on her background, which is different than mine. When you announced my appointment in August of 2022, I was embarrassed to be attacked publicly by persons who were upset with your failure to appoint a woman of color.

In early 2023, during a post CCC meeting interview, cannabis journalist Grant Smith Ellis asked me why I thought Commissioners Camargo and Concepcion were not qualified to have been chosen as Chair. You've seen the video. I was relaying what you told me - that you believed Commissioner Camargo was not qualified to be Chair and that you were aggravated by the high pressure political campaign she waged to have you appoint her. I protected you and your decision during this interview. Instead, I simply stated why my experience checked not one, but all three of

the possible qualifications under the cannabis enabling statute and there was no racial animus on my part.

Not once did I speak to the lack of qualifications of any of the other candidates. I said there were many qualified applicants, but I fit the statutory language well and I assumed that was why you chose me. I could have said, I don't know, why don't you ask the Treasurer why she extended the deadline and chose not to pick from several talented candidates of color. Instead, I tried to shift the conversation away from your decision to not appoint a person of color. Instead I made a positive statement about my own experience. I avoided embarrassing you.

Commissioner Camargo is the person who campaigned for the Chair position and was deeply upset that she was not appointed. And since then, it has become clear to me that she had it out for me since you chose me over her.

ii. The Lydia Edwards Comment

Commissioner Camargo and Senator Lydia Edwards are activists/leaders in Boston's communities of color, both reside in Boston, both work on Democratic campaigns and are involved in cannabis policy and lawmaking. I thought it was reasonable that they likely crossed paths at some time. There was no racial animus behind the comment. I don't think all people of color know each other. I do believe that two highly public political officials in the City of Boston who are women of color and have similar progressive agendas would likely know each other. I also think that political activists who work on Democratic campaigns together or are public officials who work together passing cannabis legislation are likely to know of each other. Senator Edwards was a Boston City Councilor and Commissioner Camargo resides in Boston. It is reasonable that one involved in politics like Commissioner Camargo would know her former City Councilor and now State Senator. That allegation is ludicrous.

iii. The "Buddy" Comment

This allegation is equally ludicrous. Commissioner Camargo and Cedric Sinclair are friends. Their closeness and regular collaboration is known by most at the CCC. She calls him by a cute nickname - "C". No one else does that. She even admits they have a close friendship in her written complaint to Justin Shrader from May 24, 2023. There is no racial animus surrounding my comment. It is just a fact.

B. General Response to Collins' Allegations

Early in my tenure, Shawn Collins made a joke that Cedric Sinclair disliked me, but he **hated** former Chair Steve Hoffman. Shawn later joked that Cedric's antipathy to me, including his filing HR charges against me was "Hoffman 2.0". This ongoing campaign to oust me began with Cedric, but continued throughout the entire time that I was working as Chair. Shawn Collins has bragged to others that he himself "got rid of Hoffman" and it is clear he has similarly engaged in a campaign to get rid of me too. In the demand letter he sent to your Deputy, Shawn came up with many unfounded allegations and referenced the statutory removal language so he could give you

cover to remove me. His demand letter directly references “gross misconduct” – a very high standard but lacking in the evidence he provided.

As you know, the Legislature decided that, in order to avoid potential political meddling by any one elected official, it removed the CCC from the Treasurer’s office, and created an independent agency with appointment power distributed between the Governor, Treasurer and Attorney General. The standard of removal of any Commissioner was similarly established to create a high bar against frivolous removal to ensure that undue political influence could not hamper the independent operation of this important regulatory agency. The attempt to label any negative interactions I might have had with Shawn Collins does not come close to meeting the high standard set by the Legislature which intended to reduce political meddling against five independent commissioners.

Now I’ll respond to the findings by the Second Investigator.

Many of her findings established that Shawn Collins accusations against me were unsupported by the facts. The investigator found he was not credible about many things. She only claimed she saw “discrete” violations of the CCC employee handbook, all of which I disagree with, that you are now using to remove me.

i. That Collins’ Was MIA

I never said Shawn was “MIA” while taking leave. He was missing in action from the CCC when he **wasn’t** on leave. I never said the CCC was “rudderless” when he was taking his leave. The CCC was rudderless for months, important regulatory work was delayed, and senior leadership positions went unfilled for months well before Shawn took his parental leave.

It is undisputed that Collins was missing at critical times. His failure of leadership had nothing to do with his time taking parental leave. He created confusion when he failed to inform Commissioners about the parameters of the time he planned to be out. My comments were solely directed at the times Shawn was supposed to be working but he wasn’t providing the guidance and leadership the CCC needed to manage the workload created by the Legislature’s Ch. 180 mandate to draft regulations for Social Equity and a new framework to award HCA’s. Internal and external stakeholders all knew, by late 2022 Shawn already had a foot out the door, he didn’t give his best effort, and the CCC, social equity applicants, licensees and municipalities all suffered.

Collins promised municipalities and licensees that we would finish the Host Community Agreement framework to provide guidance hoping to avoid potential threatened lawsuits sometime in March or April. Communities faced fines under a legislatively established deadline of July 1st to integrate social equity into their HCA application process. But regulations took so long, we had to draft suggested guidelines months before the regulations were even finished. Shawn wasn’t around during these critical times. This failure to support critical and time-sensitive work was not due to his parental leave. This delay was months in the making and resulted in lawsuits between licensees and municipalities wasting money. How, why due to our inability to get things done in the time frame Collins had promised.

ii. *Blunt Instrument*

The enabling statute and the Executive Director's job description is clear that: (1) the Executive Director reports to the Chair; (2) "The executive director shall serve at the pleasure of the commission"; and (3) the Chair shall "shall have and exercise supervision and control over all the affairs of the commission."

My duty as Chair is to make sure the Executive Director does his job. It was clear from the outset that he was not doing so. Shawn told me and many others in 2022 that he was going to leave the CCC. During this conversation Shawn has referenced, I told him whatever you do, I will support you. I was deeply supportive of whatever his choice would be and even offered to nominate him for the BBJ's 40 under 40 award. I told him if he left then I'd help him in his next endeavor, whether he started his own business or went to work for someone else. I followed up with him after that conversation to remind him to provide me with a statement so I could nominate him for the recognition. I believed it was a positive conversation and I was trying to be helpful. But I made clear that if he decided to stay at the CCC, things needed to change quickly, and if they didn't, then I had the statutory responsibility to effect a needed change.

Under the statute, one commissioner cannot unilaterally replace the Executive Director. It has to be a majority decision by the commissioners. The statute IS the blunt instrument. Collins has made much of this so called "blunt instrument" comment portraying it as a threat against him. This was not a threat; it was an acknowledgement that we did not have a fine-toothed method for dealing with such issues in an organization. We had only a binary choice to offer him. Stay here and do your job, or leave. I was telling him he had to decide whether to stay or leave, but it is the job of the five commissioners to ensure that the CCC is being managed by an Executive Director who is competently handling the role. My focus has always been on the Commission and how it can effectuate its mission. Our mission depended on Shawn's decision to go all in or step away. His decision would dictate how commissioners could ensure the best operation of the CCC.

The Commissioners act as the Board, and the Executive Director serves at its pleasure. The Commissioners cannot micromanage the Executive Director and the CCC staff. All the Commissioners have with the Executive Director is a binary choice – either the Executive Director does their job, or someone else will.

iii. *Announcing Shawn's Baby's Name*

If you watch the June 8th public meeting video, my congratulations to Shawn and his wife cannot be seen as anything but friendly and wishing them the best. Before the baby was born, Shawn told me about names they were considering. Before the public meeting on June 8th someone told me Shawn posted his baby's name, age and weight on Facebook. It was common knowledge. I wasn't violating privacy rights, certainly not when he had posted this information to the world on Facebook.

iv. Other Comments About His Parental Leave

During the winter and spring, it was apparent the Commission was facing a crisis. We were losing top staff left and right. Deadlines were approaching. I was fielding calls from terrified licensees and female employees. Legislators were reaching out to me about troubling issues. The media was attacking us. Failure to implement a sound testing oversight process risked the health and wellbeing of consumers. During my April call with you, I informed you of the growing pressure on me to respond to the press, the legislature, and the public to right the ship at the CCC. I told you that Shawn had announced he planned on leaving many times. I indicated that in order to move the Commission forward, I might have to exercise my statutory duty to ensure the CCC had an executive director who was up to the job and who would be held accountable to fix the many problems the CCC was facing. The following day I was berated by Sarah Kim telling me we couldn't remove Shawn because having a baby.

None of my public comments had any effect on Shawn's parental leave. I encouraged him to take all the leave he was entitled to. I shared my own experience being a working mother when I was Treasurer and told some humorous story about going back to work too soon after the birth of my daughter as I didn't have the benefit of a family leave then. At the time, I didn't know exactly what family leave benefit CCC employees are entitled to. In the minutes before the May 22nd meeting, Shawn surprised me when he told me he would announce that day his plan to leave the CCC in December of 2023. I asked him to delay making that announcement because we had several high-profile searches going on to hire the CPO and the General Counsel. Shawn agreed he would delay announcing his planned December departure. That morning, he also explicitly said he was taking his 10 weeks of parental leave in early September, to begin when his wife's family leave ended. This was the only time he clearly outlined to me his intent to take any parental leave.

Shawn failed to formally inform Commissioners that he was taking parental leave in June immediately following the birth of his daughter. I only informally learned about the birth of his baby a few days after, but I didn't know whether he was on parental leave, or what his actual plans were to manage the CCC during any absence. A father could simply take personal leave, saving family leave to later. He had sent a memo outlining how he previously assigned senior staff to handle responsibilities during short absences, however he never provided the legally required 30-day notice about his planned leave to Commissioners. Further, Shawn never told Commissioners not to contact him because he was on any type of leave. In the days following his daughter's birth, many people at the Commission cc'd him on numerous emails to keep him abreast of ongoing activities. His silence and inability to communicate clearly with commissioners about his plans created the problem. I was just trying to figure out how to handle ongoing issues during his absence.

In the minutes before the July 27th meeting, I said to Shawn that we had a lot to accomplish in the coming months, and while I appreciated that he delayed publicly announcing his planned December departure during the May 22nd meeting, I suggested that it was time for him to make that announcement so we could all move forward. He agreed he would announce his planned departure that day but then stated that he would take his family leave starting the following Monday. I was concerned about how the agency would function during an abruptly announced 10-week absence. It is the sole authority of the Commissioners to appoint an acting Executive

Director. That is why I consulted legal counsel to get clarity about how this unannounced leave would work and how I could protect the Commission's operations during what I believed would be a 10 week period without an Executive Director.

During my public comments on July 28th I mentioned repeatedly I wanted to be sensitive to and protect Shawn's rights to take leave. I never said Shawn's leave was "highly inappropriate." Commissioner Camargo was the one who used the words "highly inappropriate."

I had no time to call an executive session before Shawn told me he planned to take family leave starting on July 31st. Commissioners cannot talk privately about business without violating open meeting law. There was no malice, and I was not bullying Shawn. I believed that, as Chair, I had no other choice but to publicly alert my fellow commissioners about the pending situation given the short notice I had received from Shawn. My concern was focused on the Commission, equity, public health and safety and transparent and fair operations. I had to protect the ability of the Commissioners to determine how the CCC would function during a 10-week absence when we could not communicate with the Executive Director. That is our job. While Shawn felt comfortable that a memorandum was adequate to ensure the functioning of the commission in his absence, and he believed he had the right to appoint the Acting Executive Director, the Comptroller found that Shawn's actions to appoint an acting Executive Director were not legal, and it confirmed my concerns about how the CCC would operate in his absence.

Bottom line, I was protecting the Commission, and Shawn took all leave that was available to him. How was Shawn harmed if he ultimately exercised all of his rights and ultimately did what he said he was going to do – take paternity leave in the fall and then resign.

CLOSING REMARKS

When you first offered me the job of Chairperson of the Cannabis Control Commission, I hesitated. It was well known that this new agency, barely out of the box, was having serious growing pains. The marijuana business had gone from an illegal trade to a 1 billion per year business in the Commonwealth by 2023. It needed all things that a regulator of a mature industry needs to have, but at once. This meant that the CCC had to staff up at record speed, bringing on many persons who, naturally, had little experience with the cannabis economy or its regulation, and few leaders who already had the relevant know-how. Thus, it was hardly surprising that this young organization would have some difficulties during its early development.

You told me that, indeed, there were significant problems in the Commission. But you encouraged me to take the job, saying that my years of navigating through the ins and outs of government – as State Representative, Senator, Treasurer of the Commonwealth, and Democratic gubernatorial candidate – would equip me to lead the Commission to a better place. You told me that this would be a difficult task, but that you would give me all the support I needed. After some thought, I decided that I would accept the challenge.

Unfortunately, I may have had misjudged how serious and pervasive the problems were. I immediately encountered a wall of hostility. Within a month of my appointment, I was attacked by the Boston Herald on its front page, which stated that I had an interest in a cannabis business

and therefore a serious conflict. This was completely untrue and easily corrected. But then, when I turned to the communications department to set the record straight, I was met by the very same false claim –with our own Chief Communications Officer telling me that I needed to resign. I was left to defend myself to the media. And so it went. I found an agency made up of fiefdoms, whose leaders declined to cooperate with each other, in which constant weaponization of complaints to Human Resources had become part of the culture, waged by persons to promote themselves, take down others, satisfy grudges and the like. Hundreds of thousands of dollars had been spent on hiring mediators to solve ongoing internal conflicts, without success. Most distressing was the fact that the Commission had wholly failed in its central mission to ensure that those persons and communities who had been harmed by the war on drugs – mostly but not only persons of color – would not be left behind in sharing the economic benefits of the industry.

In April of last year when I informed you that the critical obstacle to solving the paralysis at the Commission was the person you chose to be Executive Director. He had become incapable or unwilling to motivate or manage the staff and to hold them accountable for getting the job done. I told you that he announced to a number of people that he was leaving, but it was my job as Chair to have him move on and bring in a new Executive Director who had the skill and energy to the job done. His position was the fulcrum of the organization, with sole authority to supervise the entire staff. He was your man at the Commission, your former legislative director and close friend of your Deputy, and you both objected. From that point on, I was toast as far as you were concerned, as you did all you could to intervene in the affairs of an agency that was supposed to be independent and while you searched for pretexts to justify removing me.

I respect and treasure the diversity of our organization. I have never made statements which could be properly characterized as racially, ethnically or culturally offensive to any of our staff or Commissioners. I have worked tirelessly to fulfill the promise of social equity in our programs. I have fulfilled my responsibility to "exercise supervision and control over all the affairs of the commission" as our enabling statutes requires, despite your intrusions.

You said at the outset of this hearing that you are here with an "open mind." As you know I have been dubious about that claim. Nevertheless, if by any stretch you can find yourself able to execute the impossible task of being prosecutor and judge at the same time, then I would welcome the opportunity to set aside our differences and join together in fulfilling the CCC's mission as expected by all of our stakeholders; social equity applicants, the licensees and their employees, the cities and towns which host the enterprises, those that benefit from state services funded by cannabis programs and above all the citizens of this Commonwealth who deserve better.

Thank you.