

## President Warren Advocates for U.S. NHRI at United Nations in Geneva Switzerland

It is a tremendous honor to serve as the President of the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA), the premiere human rights professional leadership organization of state and local government agencies serving nearly 250 million people. Our agency members are statutorily charged



with enforcing the human rights laws and work to prevent discrimination, bias, and hate. Our mission is to unite, educate, and strengthen state and local government human rights agencies.

In October 2023, I was so proud to be invited to represent IAOHRA at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, Switzerland. I joined the largest United States delegation ever for the UN Human Rights Committee 139<sup>th</sup> session for the consideration of the United States' fifth periodic report on compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR) and several civil society briefings and consultations. IOAHRA's contribution was to primarily to advocate for the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in the United States—similar to the 120 other democratic countries in the world. NHRIs are charged with an independent national leadership role to promote, facilitate, and coordinate human rights implementation and provide support and guidance to state and local human rights commissions.

Currently, there is no federal infrastructure in the U.S. to support human rights education, monitoring, or implementation—nor is there a comprehensive approach to human rights that incorporates all levels of government. Consequently, state and local officials are often unaware of their obligations stemming from U.S. ratified treaties like the ICCPR. An NHRI would support unprecedented progress toward domestic implementation of 3 key human rights treaties ratified 30 years ago.

Multiple civil society coalition letters and reports have been sent to the U.S. federal government urging the establishment of an NHRI. In December 2022, more than 100 civil society organizations sent a [letter](#)<sup>[1]</sup> to the White House Domestic Policy Council supporting the creation of a commission to study the establishment of a U.S. NHRI. During the most recent Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Review, the U.S. NHRI was a central focus for IAOHRA. Additionally, in March 2023, IAOHRA sent a [letter](#)<sup>[2]</sup> to the Biden Administration and the U.S. Congress delineating the critical need for an NHRI.



On November 3, 2023, in its [Concluding Observations](#)<sup>[3]</sup> the United Nations Human Rights Committee which monitors implementation of the ICCPR highlighted concerns over the lack of progress toward the establishment of a U.S. NHRI. The Human Rights Committee went on to reiterate its previous recommendations from nearly a decade ago, stating that the U.S. should establish an independent NHRI as a matter of *priority*, with a mandate to ensure implementation of the Covenant and monitor compliance with its provisions at the federal, state, local, and territorial levels.



Representing IAOHRA to advocate for a U.S. NHRI on such an esteemed global platform, helped expand and promote our international presence, leveraged meaningful collaborations, and could lead to significant long-term benefits for the United States. The insights, connections, and experiences gained in Geneva are pivotal in influencing the establishment of an independent NHRI

in the United States in accordance with the Paris Principles. We must remain optimistic that a U.S. NHRI will be established to amplify the voices of state, local, and territorial human rights agencies at the national level. Attending the sessions in Geneva was a critical opportunity to bolster the global impact of IAOHRA through meaningful engagement with international actors. These important connections provide a gateway to unite, educate, and strengthen human rights, as well as establish IAOHRA as a thought leader and resource on the international stage.

I am so proud of our IAOHRA member agencies who actively engage in enforcing anti-discrimination laws, as well as educating to protect fundamental rights—which advance the principles of the ICCPR daily. Our work is critical to giving

international human rights meaning at the state, local, and territorial level. IAOHRA will continue to advocate for the creation of U.S. NHRI as part of its unwavering commitment to bring human rights home to the United States.