



## **Filing a Complaint About Discrimination with the Maine Human Rights Campaign**

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### **What is the Maine Human Rights Commission?**

The Maine Human Rights Commission (MHRC) is the State agency responsible for enforcing Maine's anti-discrimination laws. The MHRC investigates complaints of unlawful discrimination in a number of areas, including education.

If unlawful discrimination has occurred, the MHRC can investigate the discrimination, help the people involved reach an agreement about how to address the discrimination, or take legal action in court.

More information about the MHRC, and how to file a discrimination complaint with them, can be found below and on their website:

[http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/file\\_a\\_complaint/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/file_a_complaint/index.htm)

## **MHRC COMPLAINT PROCESS FOR EDUCATION-RELATED DISCRIMINATION**

### **Who can file a complaint?**

Anyone may file a complaint who believes they have been discriminated against in school based on the following:

- sexual orientation
- gender, gender identity or expression
- race
- national origin
- disability

### **Do I need to tell the school about the discrimination first?**

No. You do not need to file a complaint with your school in order to file a complaint with the MHRC. However, you may want to talk to your school or school district first before bringing a complaint to the MHRC. That might be a faster and more efficient way to address the problem. Also, your school (or the person who you believe has discriminated against you) will receive a copy of the complaint you file with the MHRC, along with a request to provide information.

We have more information here on how to contact your school about discrimination:

[www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere](http://www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere)

**When should the complaint be filed?**

You must file your complaint with the MHRC within 300 days (including Saturdays and Sundays) of when the discrimination occurred. It is a good idea to file a complaint as soon as possible after the incident occurs because the details will be fresh in your mind.

**Can I be punished by the school for filing a complaint?**

No. You cannot be punished for filing a complaint with the MHRC. If that happens, you should tell the MHRC or contact the ACLU.

**POSSIBLE REASONS FOR FILING A COMPLAINT**

*Note: These are examples, not the only possible reasons.*

**Bullying & Harassment:** You should never be verbally and/or physically harassed by anyone at school based on your sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, national origin or disability.

**Discrimination:** You or your student group should not be treated differently or worse than other students or clubs.

**School Climate:** Your school is obligated to keep you safe at your school regardless of your sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, national origin or disability.

**HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT**

**1. If you need help filing a complaint:** Start by filling out an intake form online: <https://mainehumanrightscommission.formstack.com/forms/intake>

An MHRC employee will review your questionnaire. If they believe the incident requires further investigation, they will contact you and help you to fill out a complaint.

If you need help getting started, you can call, email, mail or visit the MHRC.

**2. If you want to file a complaint without help:** You can skip the intake process and fill out a MHRC complaint form: <http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/>

Your complaint must be signed in front of a notary public or a lawyer before you turn it in to MHRC.

It should include the following information:

- Your name, address, and the phone number where you can be reached during business hours.
- Information about the type of discrimination. For example, was it race discrimination? Disability discrimination? Both? Who was the person or group of people being discriminated against? You do not have to include the names of

people who were discriminated against, but that information is helpful to MHRC and might help them investigate the incident faster.

- What happened? Describe the incident(s) of discrimination in detail so that MHRC investigators can understand what happened. The more information that you give in the report, the stronger the complaint is.
- When did it happen? Was it an isolated incident or did it happen more than once?
- The name and address of the school or school district.

### **3. Send your complaint to the MHRC.**

Remember, your complaint must be signed in front of a notary public or a Maine lawyer.

File your complaint in person or mail it to:

Maine Human Rights Commission  
51 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333  
Telephone: 207-624-6290  
Fax: 207-624-8729

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

When MHRC receives your signed complaint form, it will assign a case number to you.

The person or people who you identify as discriminating against you will be sent a copy of your complaint along with a Request for Information and Documents. You will receive a copy of everything MHRC sends to the person or people you identify as having discriminated against you. The accused person or people will usually have one month to respond to your complaint, but they are sometimes allowed extensions.

MHRC will send you a copy of any answers provided by the person or people you identify as having discriminated against you. You will have the opportunity to look over the answers, and send a response to MHRC in writing.

More information about what happens after you file a complaint can be found here:  
[http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/guidance/after\\_complaint\\_filed.htm](http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/guidance/after_complaint_filed.htm)

**For more information about preventing discrimination in schools, go to:**  
[www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere](http://www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere).