E-FILED 2024 JUL 22 5:26 PM POLK - CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT

Complaint Form

We can investigate complaints against most state and local governmental agencies, as well as child welfare or juvenile justice services under contract with an agency. We do not oversee courts, private businesses, the Legislature, or the federal government. We cannot provide legal representation or advice. We ask that you first attempt to resolve your complaint with the agency before submitting a complaint with the Ombudsman. We will typically not initiate an investigation on a matter that is before a court or under review by the agency.

Contact Information

*indicates a required field

***First Name:**Sondra ***Last Name:**Wilson

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***City:**Ames ***State:**IA

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Offender #(if applicable):

Complaint Information

***What agency is your complaint about?**
Iowa Civil Rights Commission

***Please provide a summary of your complaint. Include dates, locations, case numbers, and names of government officials you have dealt with, if known.**
For approximately six months (October 2021âMarch 31, 2022) I volunteered for the nonprofit organization âReliable Streetâ in Ames, IA. Volunteer work included: at the request of Reliable Street's CEO, Lyndsay Nissen, restoration and lead development of a community garden located on the property. Garden was designed by SHEPH (Students Helping End Poverty and Hunger), the Ames High School gardening club. I was requested to supervise and manage the project. following the approval of my proposal at the end of October 2021, implementing native prairie restoration to surround the garden. creating and distributing fliers for the open mic night. Word-of-mouth advertising. leading multiple open mic nights (introducing artists, announcements, etc.) at the request of Reliable Street's CEO. helping to organize multiple community events. After allegedly receiving multiple complaints about me â without asking me anything or providing any specifics â on March 31, 2022 (Transgender Day of Visibility) Nissen banned me from entering onto the property based on these allegations. It came completely unexpectedly, as I was under the impression people were very happy with me and my work. After learning who one of the complainants was, and the nature of the complaint, and knowing their accusation was false, I wrote a letter to the owner to explain the situation and request to talk through what was said so I could learn why I was kicked off the property. Following no response, and upon recommendation by the Better Business Bureau and multiple local attorneys, I filed a complaint with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (CP# 04-22-78265) against: Reliable Street inc â the 501c3 organization whom I was volunteering for (I was told by Nissen that the garden project was not covered by Reliable Street's mission, so I wasn't volunteering for them, but in her statements to ICRC she claims my volunteer work was on behalf of Reliable Street.) Lockwood Cafe â the neighboring business whose employee(s) may have lodged slanderous complaint(s) against me. LOVE CLUB LLC â owner of property; appears to be owned by the CEO of Reliable Street and her husband. Because Nissen informed me

the garden wasn't covered by Reliable Street's mission, I was under the impression I was volunteering on behalf of the owner(s) of the property. On August 3 ICRC closed the case following a series of false statements from Nissen and her friend, Charlie Esker. I appealed. On September 27 ICRC denied my appeal, signed by Sierra Walker, Attorney 1. The ICRC states that, âThe Iowa Civil Rights Commission issues screening decisions based on the information collected to date. If the information indicates a âreasonable possibility of a probable cause determination or the legal issues in the complaint need developmentâ the Commission will âscreen inâ a case for further investigation. Iowa Admin. Code r. 161â3.12(1)(f). During the screening stage, the Commission draws all ârational, reasonable, and otherwise permissibleâ inferences in Complainantâs favor. See Phillips v. Covenant Clinic, 625 N.W.2d 714, 718 (Iowa 2001) (quoting Butler v. Hoover Nature Trail, Inc., 530 N.W.2d 85, 88 (Iowa Ct. App. 1994)). Importantly, the Commission does not evaluate credibility at the screening stage, and instead evaluates only whether the stated facts create a âreasonable possibilityâ for a probable cause finding.... a.Â If further investigation is not warranted, the complaint is administratively closed. The complainant has the right to request reconsideration which is explained in the closure letter. b. If further investigation is warranted, the parties will be given an opportunity to participate in âmediation.â Mediation allows the parties to resolve the complaint prior to investigation. Â It is a voluntary, confidential process that is free of charge to the parties.Â The Commission provides an experienced, trained mediator to assist the parties in resolving the issues. 1 I certainly provided enough evidence to demonstrate that âfurther investigation is warrantedâ. I provided evidence which clearly demonstrates that at least one statement Nissen made were false, and I provided additional evidence which strongly brings into question several other false statements made by Nissen and Esker. Although ICRC claims they âdraw all 'rational, reasonable, and otherwise permissible' inferences in Complainantâs favorâ, it is clear they did not. ICRC closed the case improperly. We should have moved to mediation. I absolutely presented probable cause. I believe ICRC was negligent in their determination, and they recklessly endanger my reputation via leaving this unresolved â especially in light of the criminal accusations against me made by Nissen and Esker.

***What steps have you taken to resolve your complaint with the agency? Is this issue currently being reviewed by a court or under review by the agency? If yes, please include case numbers associated with the case or agency review.**
I have called them and emailed them, each time resulting in the recommendation that I âfind an attorneyâ. After telling them I cannot afford an attorney, they sent me a list of legal aid organizations â none of which have the authority to help because each of them told me they âdo not take fee-generating casesâ. I am disappointed that they've left this issue open and unresolved in this way, and further burdened me instead of offering sufficient assistance. When I contacted the Ames Police Department regarding the fraudulent statements made to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission by Nissen and Esker â that they violated Iowa Code 714.8 â Supervising Officer Shaefer told me to call ICRC and ask them who has jurisdictional authority over statements that are made to them. The woman on the phone (I have the call recorded) told me that ânobodyâ does. She said I could file with the Attorney General, however, so I did on 10-25-2022. I have not heard back from them yet. If you have questions or need additional evidence from me, please ask.

***What resolution are you looking for?**
I would like the Office of the Ombudsman to review the evidence and statements I made to the ICRC. If you believe this should be investigated further, I would like a statement from your office stating this position â that is was closed prematurely. Please contact me to discuss your findings and determination prior to releasing such statement so I can ensure you are noticing all the facts of this fairly complex case. Additionally, I would like parties related to the initial incident and these horrible allegations against me to be interviewed by an investigating agency to verify whether or not anyone's statements against me and/or statements to the ICRC were fraudulent and/or tortious.