STATE OF ILLINOIS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:	)	
	)	
MEGGAN SOMMERVILLE,	)	
	)	
Complainant,	)	**Charge Nos.: 2011CN2993**
	)	**2011CP2994**
	)	**EEOC No.: N/A**
	)	**ALS No.: 13-0060C**
HOBBY LOBBY STORES,	)	
	)	**Judge William J. Borah**
Respondent.	)	

RECOMMENDED LIABILITY DETERMINATION

This matter comes to be heard on the parties' cross motions for summary decision. Both parties filed responses and replies. The Illinois Department of Human Rights filed an opposition brief to Respondent's motion. The matter is ready for decision.

The Department is an additional statutory agency that has issued state actions in this matter. Therefore, the Department is an additional party of record.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The following material facts were derived from uncontested sections of the record. The findings did not require, and were not the result of, credibility determinations.

1. On February 28, 2013, Complainant, Meggan Sommerville, filed two separate complaints with the Illinois Human Rights Commission against Respondent, Hobby Lobby Stores. One complaint cited Article 2 of the Illinois Human Rights Act, employment, and the second, Article 5, public accommodation. Both complaints named sexual orientation discrimination, related to gender identity, as the protected class. The cases were consolidated on May 23, 2013.

2. In July 1998, Respondent hired Complainant as an employee. In 2000, Complainant was transferred to Respondent's East Aurora store, No. 237.

3. Complainant was present on Respondent's premises both as an employee and as a customer. The general public and employees utilize the store's restrooms, which are designated by gender.

4. Since 2007, Complainant implemented a procedure toward transitioning from male to female. In 2009, Complainant had medical treatment from health care providers and other services at Howard Brown Health Center, which resulted in female secondary sex characteristics, including breasts and absence of facial hair.

5. Complainant is a transsexual who presents and identifies as female.

6. In February 2010, Complainant removed the male name from her employee nametag, without objection from Respondent, as not to confuse the customers with the noticeable physical manifestations of the transition.

7. On July 9, 2010, Complainant formally informed Respondent through Edward Slavin, store manager, of her male to female transition and her intent to use the women's restroom.

8. Respondent changed Complainant's personnel records and benefits information to identify her as female. Complainant appears at work in feminine dress and make-up. Employees and employers refer to Complainant by her chosen female name.

9. However, Respondent did not consent to Complainant's use of the store's designated women's restroom, until Complainant produced legal authority mandating its use to her.

10. On July 12, 2010, Complainant had her name legally changed to "Meggan Renee Sommerville," by order of the Circuit Court of Kendall County, Illinois.

11. On July 29, 2010, the State of Illinois issued its driver's license identifying Complainant as female.

12. In July 2010, Complainant obtained a new social security card with her female name.

13. In July 2010, Complainant produced to Anna Lee Miller, Respondent's Human Resources Specialist, a copy of the Illinois Human Rights Act, related statutes from Iowa and Colorado, a copy of her revised Illinois driver's license, her social security card, and her court ordered name change. The material submitted also included a letter dated July 21, 2015, from Kristin Koglovitz, Clinic Director of Howard Brown Health Center, who identified and verified Complainant as a female transgender individual, described the transition process, and advocated Complainant's use of the women's restroom at Respondent's store.

14. On July 30, 2010, Miller instructed Complainant to communicate with Respondent's legal office and, despite the information submitted, she was not permitted to use the women's restroom.

15. Complainant used the women's facilities at nearby businesses.

16. On February 23, 2011, Complainant was given a written warning for entering Respondent's women's restroom.

17. During the course of litigation, Respondent changed its precondition for the use of the women's facilities from producing legal authority to surgery. In 2014, Respondent modified its condition option to changing her birth certificate.

18. In December 2013 or January 2014, Respondent had built a "unisex" restroom for Complainant's use.

19. As of this Recommended Liability Determination, Complainant is still not permitted to use Respondent's women's restroom facilities as an employee or customer.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter.

2. Complainant established direct evidence of sexual related identity discrimination by Respondent preventing Complainant's access and use of the women's restroom at Respondent's store.

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY DECISION STANDARD

Under section 8-106.1 of the Human Rights Act, either party to a complaint may move for summary decision. 775 ILCS 5/8-106.1. A summary decision is analogous to a summary judgment in the Circuit Courts. Cano v. Village of Dolton, 250 Ill.App.3d 130, 138, 620 N.E.2d 1200, 1206 (1st Dist. 1993).

A motion for summary decision should be granted when there is no genuine issue of material fact and the moving party is entitled to a recommended order in its favor as a matter of law. Fitzpatrick v. Human Rights Comm'n, 267 Ill.App.3d 386, 391, 642 N.E.2d 486, 490 (4th Dist. 1994). All pleadings, affidavits, interrogatories, and admissions must be strictly construed against the movant and liberally construed in favor of the non-moving party. Kolakowski v. Voris, 76 Ill.App.3d 453, 456-57, 395 N.E.2d 6, 9 (1st Dist.1979). Although not required to prove her case as if at a hearing, the non-moving party must provide some factual basis for denying the motion. Birck v. City of Quincy, 241 Ill.App.3d 119, 121, 608 N.E.2d 920, 922 (4th Dist. 1993). Only facts supported by evidence, and not mere conclusions of law, should be considered. Chevrie v. Gruesen, 208 Ill.App.3d 881, 883-84, 567 N.E.2d 629, 630-31 (2d Dist. 1991). If a respondent supplies sworn facts that, if uncontroverted, warrant judgment in its favor as a matter of law, a complainant may not rest on her pleadings to create a genuine issue of material fact. Fitzpatrick, 267 Ill.App.3d at 392, 642 N.E.2d at 490. Where the party's affidavits stand uncontroverted, the facts contained therein must be accepted as true and, therefore, a party's failure to file counter-affidavits in response is frequently fatal to her case. Rotzoll v. Overhead Door Corp., 289 Ill.App.3d 410, 418, 681 N.E.2d 156, 161 (4th Dist.1997). Inasmuch as summary decision is a drastic means for resolving litigation, the movant's right to a summary decision must be clear and free from doubt. Purtill v. Hess, 111 Ill.2d 229, 240 (1986).

Summary of Issues

Complainant is a transsexual, who presents and identifies as female, was and is denied access to Respondent's women's restroom at its store, both in her capacity as an employee and a customer. Complainant alleges such disparate treatment is contrary to the Act in terms and conditions of Complainant's employment and a denial of the full and equal enjoyment of a public accommodation.

Respondent contends the Act does not require it as an employer or as a public accommodation to permit Complainant, a transgender person, to use its store's restroom other than the one designated for her birth gender, male, or until she undergoes anatomical surgery.

Act's Interpretation

"The Illinois Human Rights Act is remedial legislation that must be construed liberally to effectuate its purpose." Nuraoka v. Illinois Human Rights Commission, 252 Ill.App.3d 1039, 625 N.E.2d 251 (1st Dist. 1993) citing, Nielsen Co. v. Public Building Commission of Chicago, 81 Ill.2d 290, 410 N.E.2d 40 (1980).

A primary rule of statutory construction is to give effect to the words selected by the General Assembly and its intent. "No word or paragraph should be interpreted so as to be rendered meaningless." Boaden v. Illinois Department of Law Enforcement, 171 Ill.2d 230, 664 N.E.2d 61 (1996); Sangamon County Sheriff's Department v. Illinois Human Rights Commission et al., 233 Ill.2d 125, 908 N.E.2d 39, (2009), citing Wade v. City of North Chicago Police Pension Board, 226 Ill.2d 485, 877 N.E2d 1011 (2008). The best indication of the legislature's intent is the language of the statute, which must be given its plain and ordinary meaning. Id., citing Cinkus v. Village of Stickney Municipal Officers Electoral Board, 228 Ill.2d 200, 886 N.E.2d 1011 (2008).

Discrimination Defined

Section 1-102(A) of the Act provides that it is the "public policy" of this State to "secure for all individuals within Illinois the freedom from discrimination against any individual because

of his or her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, *sexual orientation*, or unfavorable discharge from military service in connection with employment, real estate transactions, access to financial credit, and the availability of public accommodations." (Emphasis added.) [1]

Section 1-103 (O-1) of the Act defines "sexual orientation," in pertinent part, as "gender related identity, whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth."

Section 2-102(A) of the Act provides it is a "civil rights violation" for "any employer ...to segregate...discipline ...terms, privileges or conditions of employment on the basis of unlawful discrimination ..."

Section 5-102 (A) of the Act provides it is a "civil rights violation" to "deny or refuse to another the full and equal enjoyment of the facilities... and services of any public place of accommodation."

Statutory Interpretation

Article 2, Employment

Respondent's first statutory argument is that the Act does not address whether a transgender employee has the right to use a restroom other than the restroom associated with the person's sex at birth, "thus, leaving the matter to the employers' discretion." [2]

The opposite is correct; Article 2, employment, is meant to be broad with noted exceptions, which does not exclude the use of restrooms by transsexuals.

Respondent has not revealed any pertinent limitations of Section 2-102(A), Civil Rights Violations relating to Section 1-102(A), Freedom from Unlawful Discrimination or Section 1-103 (O-1), Sexual Orientation, in which sexual related identity is part. As read, sexual related

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[1] All of the statutory classes were purposely cited, as each are equally protected and enforced under the Act.

[2] Respondent cites an Article 5, Public Accommodation, clauses, Section 5/5-102(A) and 5/5-103(B) for its Article 2, Employment, argument; this statutory authority is misplaced.

identity is protected against all statutory employment civil rights violations, "whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth." Id.

There is no special treatment based on sexual orientation here, only the basic treatment of any employee. Section 1-101.1 of the Act. The basic right to use a restroom, as a term and condition of employment, is discussed below.

Significantly, Respondent failed to note that if the legislature wished to limit Article 2, it would have done so under Section 2-104, *Exemptions*. (Emphasis added.) It did not.

Therefore, an employee's rights under sexual orientation, including sexual related identity, is broadly interpreted and protected against all listed civil rights violations. Id.

Article 5 – Public Accommodations

Complainant averred that she was both an employee and customer of Respondent, and that the women's restroom was available to the general public. Respondent does not counter Complainants allegations, and they are accepted as true. Rotzoll, supra.

The interpretation of Article Five is limited to the facts of this case, and the issue before me.

Article 1, General Provisions and Definitions, relate to the entire Act. Thus, Section 1-102 (A), Freedom from Unlawful Discrimination; Section 1-103 (D), Civil Rights Violations; Section 1-103 (O), Sex; and Section 1-103 (O-1) Sexual Orientation, are pertinent to Article 5, Public Accommodation.

It has been established that Respondent is a statutory public accommodation and that it cannot "deny or refuse to another (customer) the full and equal enjoyment of the facilities, goods and services of any public place of accommodation." Section 5-102 (A) Enjoyment of Facilities, Goods and Services.

However, Section 5-103 (B), Facilities Distinctly Private, sets out an exemption to an Article 5 civil rights violation. "Nothing in this Article shall apply to: Any facility, as to discrimination based on sex, which is distinctly private in nature such as restrooms, shower

rooms, bath houses, health clubs and other similar facilities for which the Department, in its rules and regulations, may grant exemption based on bona fide consideration of public policy."

Respondent contends that being anatomically correct makes a female, as that was and is Respondent's prerequisite before Complainant could be able to use the women's restroom. However, absence of male genitalia does not make a female, as that could occur by illness or injury.

Moreover, enforcement of Respondent's approach is inherently problematic. Broad customer screening could prove difficult, whether by merely asking the customer if they were transsexual or using a version of "stop and frisk" prior to the facility's use.

Section 1-102(O) reads that "Sex means the status of being male or female." However, the definition of sex must incorporate Section 1-103 (O-1), "gender related identity, whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth." Thus, it is not relevant what the person's sex was at the time of birth. Sex relates to a person's sexual related identity, which is discussed below.

The same reasoning is used to dismiss the third condition of Respondent's prior to Complainant's use of its women's facility. Respondent required Complainant to change her birth certificate to reflect her current sexual identity. Complainant's birth gender is academic and is not relevant here.

Discrimination Standards – Sexual Identity

It is not necessary to discuss *prima facie* elements, as this is a rare case where there is no disagreement as to Respondent's action.

Direct Method of Proof

There are two methods for proving discrimination, direct and indirect. Sola v. Illinois Human Rights Commission, 316 Ill.App.3d 528, 736 N.E.2d 1150, (1st Dist. 2000). Under the direct approach, Complainant must present sufficient evidence, direct or circumstantial, without reliance upon inference or presumption, to allow a trier of fact to decide

that her sexual related identity was a motivating factor in Respondent's alleged adverse act. Id. A review of what an employer did and/or said regarding a particular employment decision is required. Where there is direct evidence of discrimination, it is unnecessary to use the three-part analysis. Catherine Littlejohn and Wal-Mart Stores, IHRC, ALS No. 9929, November 4, 2009.

Direct evidence is unique as "it essentially requires an admission by the decision maker that his actions were based on the prohibited animus...." Davy Cady and Northeastern Illinois University, IHRC, ALS No. 10589, February 1, 2005, quoting Haywood v. Lucent Tech, Inc., 169 F. Supp.2d 890, 907 (N.D. Illinois 2001), citing Radue v. Kimberly Clark Corp., 219 F. 3d 612, 616 (7th Cir. 2000). (A notice for a teaching position required that candidates "need to be minority."); Melvin Osborne and Robert Boudreaux and Steve's Old Time Tap, IHRC, ALS No. S-11225, April 25, 2001. (The reason as to why complainants were directed to leave the tavern was based on race as they were told, "I own this place and you get your Black asses out of here.")

Analysis

The evidence in this case establishes that Respondent's decision forbidding Complainant access and use of its women's restroom violated the Act, under the direct method of proof. Respondent's motive for its decision was and is Complainant's sexual related identity, female, a decision that should have been made irrespective of her designated sex at birth, male. Respondent substantially relied on a prohibited factor in its decision. Lalvani v. Illinois Human Rights Commission, 324 Ill.App.3d 774, 755 N.E.2d 51 (1st Dist. 2001).

"There is no surer way to find out what the parties meant, than to see what they have done." Eric Sprinkle and Rivers Edge Complex, Inc., IHRC, ALS No. 10565, August 7, 2000, quoting Brooklyn Life Insurance Co. v. Dutcher, 95 U.S. 269, 273 (1877). In this case, the facts are straightforward.

It has been established that Complainant is a transgender woman, acknowledged as such by Respondent in both words and acts. By July 2010, Complainant had been an employee of Respondent for twelve years, and her transition from male to female was advanced and apparent, as she had physical characteristics in conformity with her gender identity.

In July 2010, after Complainant's discussion with the store's manager and as a result of it, Respondent changed Complainant's personnel records and benefits information to reflect her transition to female. Employees and employers referred to Complainant as "Meggan," her chosen female name, and she performed her assigned duties in feminine dress and makeup.

However, Complainant's request for access to Respondent's women's restroom in its store was denied. Instead, Respondent created its first precondition. It demanded from Complainant presentment of legal authority that would mandate it to allow a transgender person the use of a store's designated restroom different from that of the person's birth gender.

In response, Complainant submitted a copy of her court ordered name change, along with a driver's license and a social security card reflecting that change. Moreover, a written medical explanation and verification of her transition from Howard Brown Health Center was submitted, with its recommendation that Complainant be permitted to use Respondent's facility. Finally, a copy of the Illinois Human Rights Act was presented, along with other states' laws on the topic of sexual identity.

Respondent merely directed Complainant to its legal department. To this day, Complainant is being forced to use the restrooms available in other unrelated stores or, since January 2014, a "unisex" restroom. The prohibition is enforced by threat of employment discipline. For example, in February 2011, Complainant received a written warning because of her attempt to use the women's facility.

Other Arguments

The totality of this order addresses the legal authority that mandates Respondent to grant Complainant access to its women's restroom both as employee and customer, but other arguments of significance also were raised.

Respondent added anatomical surgery to the list of preconditions it demanded of Complainant. However, nothing in the Act makes any surgical procedure a prerequisite for its protection of sexual related identity. Therefore, Respondent's unilateral surgical requirement is untenable.

Respondent also raised a concern about a woman employee expressing "discomfort" with Complainant being present in the women's restroom. However, a co-worker's discomfort cannot justify discriminatory terms and conditions of employment. The prejudices of co-workers or customers are part of what the Act was meant to prevent. Raintree Health Care Center v. Illinois Human Rights Commission, 173 Ill.2d 469, 672 N.E.2d 1136, (1996) and Eric Sprinkle and Rivers Edge Complex, Inc., IHRC, ALS No.10565, August 7, 2000, (HIV medical condition and loss of customers); Jack Haynes and City of Springfield, Office of Public Utilities, IHRC, ALS No. 7304 (S), April 3, 1998 (unwillingness to be supervised by a black man).

In 2014, Respondent built a "unisex" single use restroom for Complainant, which segregates only her because of her gender related identity, and perpetuates different treatment, contrary to the Act. [3]

Respondent's prohibition and/or segregation of Complainant to a "unisex" restroom is an adverse act and subjects her to different terms and conditions than similarly situated non-transgender employees. Access to restrooms, if available, is a major and basic condition of employment. DeClue v. Central Illinois Light Company, 223 F.3d 434 (7th Cir. 2000) and OSHA, Interpretation of 20 C.F.R. 1910.141 Section (c)(1)(i): Toilet Facilities (April 4, 1998)).

[3] However, the "unisex" restroom may resolve any concern by those who are allegedly uncomfortable by Complainant, by giving them the option of using it.

Therefore, I find that Respondent's decision to restrict Complainant's access to the women's restroom on account of her gender related identity violated the Act as it concerns both employment and public accommodation. I further find that the record contains direct evidence related to both counts of the complaints that the decision was based on the gender related identity of the Complainant.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing, there are no genuine issues of material fact and Complainant is entitled to a recommended order in her favor as a matter of law.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. Respondent's motion for summary decision is denied;
2. Complainant's motion for summary decision is granted;
3. A status hearing is set for June 25, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. when a damages hearing date will be set.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

BY: William J. Borah

WILLIAM J. BORAH
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW SECTION

ENTERED: May 15, 2015

ALS NO(S): 13-0060 (C)
CHARGE NO(S): N/A
EEOC NO (S): 2011CN2993,2011CP2994
CASE NAME: SOMMERVILLE VS. HOBBY LOBBY STORES

MEMORANDUM OF SERVICE

The undersigned certified that on **May 13, 2015** she **re-served** a copy of the attached **RECOMMENDED LIABILITY DETERMINTAION** on each person named below by depositing the same in the U.S. mail box at **100 W. Randolph St., Suite 5-100, Chicago, Illinois,** properly posted for **FIRST CLASS MAIL**, addressed as follows:

Sonya Rosenberg
Gray I. Mateo-Harris
Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP
2 North LaSalle St., Suite 1700
Chicago, IL. 60602

Jacob Meister
Katherine Eder
Jacob Meister & Associates
2129 N. Western Avenue
Chicago, IL. 60647

INTER-OFFICE MAIL TO:

Tomas Ramirez
Staff Attorney
Illinois Department of Human Rights
100 W. Randolph St., Suite 10-100
Chicago, IL. 60601

Shantelle Baker
Signature

ALJ: