



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas, 500621, Trinidad and Tobago, W.I

Phone: (868) 672-0928 • Fax: (868) 671-8826 • E-mail: eoc@gov.tt • Website: www.equalopportunity.gov.tt

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Response to the decision to discontinue GATE funding to persons over 50

The Equal Opportunity Commission (the Commission) refers to the decision taken by Cabinet to discontinue the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding for persons over the age of 50. Though provisions have been made for continuing students (over the age of 50) already enrolled in undergraduate programmes, the Commission is disheartened by this development and is of the view that the position is discriminatory.

Although age is not a status under the Equal Opportunity Act (“the Act”), it should be noted that under section 27(1) (c) of the Act, the Commission is mandated “to keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them.” To this end, proposals have been submitted to the Office of the Attorney General for the Act to be amended to include age inter alia as a status ground. The Commission trust that the relevant action will be taken to include age as a status ground for protection against discrimination.

The Commission is hopeful that this decision can be revisited and is willing to assist with developing solutions that are non-discriminatory.

The Commission is available to consult on this issue of discrimination and provide public education on the Act.

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COMMISSIONERS: Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite (Chairman)
Dr. Beverly Ann Marie Beckles (Vice Chairman) • Dr. Indira Rampersad
Mr. Eric Colin Cowie • Mr. James Chin Chuck

About the EOC

The primary task of the EOC is to oversee implementation of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03, which prohibits certain kinds of discrimination and seeks to promote equal opportunity between persons of different status.

- The Act is concerned with discrimination in four broad categories - employment, education, provision of goods and services, and provision of accommodation - where someone has suffered less-favourable treatment:
 - Because of their status, that is, because of one of the following personal characteristics: race, ethnicity, religion, sex, marital status, origin or disability;
 - Or by way of victimisation, that is, in retaliation for doing certain actions that are protected under the Act, for example, lodging a complaint with the Commission or giving evidence in support of someone who has lodged a complaint.
- A person who believes that they have been subjected to discrimination in any of the above areas may lodge a complaint with the EOC. The EOC is mandated to receive, investigate and as far as possible conciliate complaints.
- If the matter is unresolved, the complaint can be referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (the 'EOT'). The EOT is a superior court of record and its mandate is to hear and adjudicate on matters referred to it by the EOC. The EOT has the power to make orders, declarations and awards of compensation as it determines to be appropriate.

The EOC would urge all persons to be mindful of these provisions and to refrain from discriminatory practices which infringe the human rights of others.

For more information, please visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt.

Contact:

Ria Mohammed-Pollard (Mrs.)

Manager, Corporate Communications

Equal Opportunity Commission

55-57 Manic Street, 500621, Chaguanas

Tel: (868) 672-0928 (868) 671-8826

E-mail: ria.mohammedpollard@eoc.gov.tt