COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Hope E. Brueland	:	State Civil Service Commission
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Department of Corrections	:	Appeal No. 31724

Hope E. Brueland	Jocelyn G. Blass
Pro Se	Attorney for Appointing Authority

ADJUDICATION

This is an appeal by Hope E. Brueland challenging her removal from probationary Corrections Officer Trainee employment with the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Department of Corrections. A hearing was held on March 19, 2026, via video, before Commissioner Gregory M. Lane.

The Commissioners have reviewed the Notes of Testimony and the exhibits introduced at the hearing, as well as the brief submitted by the appointing authority.[1] The issue before the Commission is whether the appointing authority removed appellant from her Corrections Officer Trainee position for reasons motivated by discrimination. For the reasons set forth below, the appeal is dismissed.

[1] Appellant elected to file a brief at the close of the hearing on March 19, 2026. (N.T. at 195). On May 7, 2026, the Commission issued a briefing schedule, ordering appellant to file her brief on or before May 21, 2026, and the appointing authority to file its brief on or before June 4, 2026. Appellant did not file a written brief. The appointing authority submitted its written brief to the Commission on June 4, 2026.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. By letter dated October 23, 2025, appellant was informed she was removed from her Correctional Officer Trainee employment, probationary status, with the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Department of Corrections (hereinafter "appointing authority"). Comm. Ex. A.

2. The appointing authority's decision to remove appellant was based on appellant's violation of the following charges:

    1. Department of Corrections Code of Ethics, Section B #21, which states; 'An employee who knows that he/she will be unable to report for duty due to illness, emergency, or injury shall immediately notify his/her supervisor in accordance with their local policy, advising the supervisor of the nature of the injury, emergency, or illness and the expected date of return to duty.'
    2. SCI Camp Hill Policy 4.1.1 CAM – Section 44B – Reporting Off From Normal Working Duties.
    3. SCI Camp Hill Policy 4.1.1 CAM – Section 44E – AWOL/Tardy.
    4. Undependability.
    5. Job Abandonment.

    Comm. Ex. A.

3. The removal letter further provided, "Specifically, you have been on unauthorized absences since July 24, 2025, and have not contacted your employer since August 20, 2025. Additionally, you did not have enough leave to cover your absences." Comm. Ex. A.

4. The appeal was properly raised before this Commission and was heard under Section 3003(7)(ii) of Act 71 of 2018. Comm. Ex. C.

5. Appellant began working for the appointing authority as a Corrections Officer Trainee in October of 2024. N.T. pp. 23-24.

6. She worked in that position until her removal in October of 2025. N.T. pp. 23-24.

7. Appellant was out of work for a heart and lung work-related injury beginning on July 7, 2025. N.T. pp. 139-141; AA Ex. 15.

8. She was scheduled to return to full duty work on July 15, 2025, but she was a "no-call, no-show" for that day. N.T. pp. 142-143; AA Exs. 15-16.

9. Appellant attempted to return to work on July 16, 2025, but was called in to meet with human resources. N.T. p. 143.

10. On July 16, 2025, appellant submitted a doctor's note from UPMC Urgent Care to the appointing authority. She gave the note both directly and via email to Shari Southers, a Human Resource Analyst 1 with the Office of Administration (hereinafter "OA") covering the appointing authority. N.T. pp. 26, 146; AA Ex. 7.

11. The doctor's note provided, "It is my medical opinion that Hope Brueland [appellant] should not sit or stand for prolonged periods of time. She also is unable to carry *Oleoresin Capsicum* (OC) sprays during this time." AA Ex. 7 (emphasis in original).

12. Appellant emailed Southers a copy of the doctor's note concerning her Oleoresin Capsicum (hereinafter "OC") spray restriction, as well as a return-to-work note with a return date of July 17, 2025. N.T. p. 146; AA Ex. 7.

13. On July 17, 2025, Southers emailed a copy of the note to Kevin Bly, Major of the Guard, and to Jason Albert, Deputy Superintendent, to inquire if

the appointing authority could accommodate appellant's restrictions. N.T. pp. 147-148; AA Ex. 17.

14. Major Bly responded that the appointing authority could not accommodate appellant's restrictions at that time. N.T. p. 148; AA Ex. 17.

15. Following Major Bly's response, Deputy Superintendent Albert added that, "Being able to carry OC spray is a condition of her employment, make sure she is aware of this." AA Ex. 17.

16. Under the list of Essential Job Functions for Corrections Officer Trainee, number thirteen provides, "Use and maintain various equipment and tools of the corrections profession." N.T. p. 103; AA Ex. 8.

17. On or around August 12 or 13, 2025, appellant turned in a second doctor's note to the appointing authority which directly indicated she was pregnant, and through which she requested to return to work on modified work duty. N.T. pp. 48-49; Ap. Ex. 5.

18. Appellant emailed the second doctor's note to Southers on August 13, 2025, stating,

> I sent u [sic] my new note from my doctor! I saw my message didn't attach with it! I was put on leave because I couldn't use OC they took the restriction down and put me on regular pregnant restrictions. I was told to email it to you and find out when to come back to work!

N.T. pp. 150-151; AA Ex. 18.

19. The doctor's note provided,

> Hope [appellant] is currently pregnant and has an Estimated Date of Delivery: 2/11/26. The following work/school restrictions apply during pregnancy:
>
> 1. Avoid lifting greater than 20 lbs.
> 2. Avoid activities which could result in a fall or injury.
> 3. Avoid prolonged standing and walking; allow 15 minute rest breaks every 2-4 hours.
> 4. Allow regular meal breaks.
> 5. Allow her to drink water, eat snacks and use the restroom freely.

> She will need to be excused from work/school for at least 6 weeks after her delivery for her postpartum recovery.

Ap. Ex. 5.

20. On August 13, 2025, Southers emailed appellant notifying her that Southers forwarded appellant's second doctor's note to Major Bly, and that a shift commander would be giving her a call, per standard practice. N.T. p. 151; AA Ex. 18.

21. Also on August 13, 2025, Major Bly emailed appellant with instructions to complete return-to-work paperwork, attached to his email, in order for the appointing authority to render a decision on her request for modified duty. N.T. pp. 51, 169; AA Ex. 20.

22. The shift commander with the appointing authority attempted to contact appellant via telephone about twelve to fifteen times during the period of August 13 to August 20, 2025 regarding her return to work. N.T. p. 171.

23. On August 20, 2025, Captain Jeffrey C. Elwell emailed Deputy Superintendent Albert, copying Major Bly, informing them that,

> Contact made at 1517. I utilized her emergency contact of [sic] 'Brandon Young' who after a minute gave the phone to her. She stated she would be in to pick up the folder at 1830 tonight. I will send a follow-up email as to whether this came to fruition.

N.T. pp. 52-24; AA Ex. 14.

24. Appellant picked up the return-to-work paper at the facility in person on August 20, 2025. N.T. p. 54; AA Ex. 14.

25. Appellant did not return the paperwork to either Major Bly or to Southers. N.T. pp. 155; 171.

26. Field Human Resource Officer Jennifer Bott contacted Equal Opportunity Specialist Eileen Hower about appellant's case involving pregnancy-related restrictions on August 20, 2025. N.T. p. 112; AA Ex. 21.

27. On August 26, 2025, Bott updated Hower on appellant's status, notifying her that appellant had neither submitted any paperwork nor contacted the appointing authority since picking up the paperwork from Captain Elwell. N.T. p. 113; AA Ex. 21.

28. Appellant did not return to work in either July or August 2025. N.T. pp. 149, 155.

29. On September 3, 2025, Hower notified Bott she spoke with appellant regarding a possible accommodation. N.T. pp. 114-115; AA Ex. 21.

30. Also on September 3, 2025, Bott responded that no one with the appointing authority had heard from appellant since she picked up the forms, and that appellant had not submitted her return-to-work paperwork. N.T. pp. 114-115; AA Ex. 21.

31. Bott and Hower exchanged emails again on September 25, 2025, wherein Hower indicated appellant never sent in her required paperwork, nor did she return Bott's voice message left on September 17, 2025. N.T. p. 116; AA Ex. 21.

32. On October 21, 2025, Bott emailed Hower regarding a voicemail appellant left Bott. In her voicemail, appellant stated she had dropped off paperwork to human resources in September. N.T. p. 116-117; AA Ex. 12.

33. Bott forwarded Hower's message to her staff, asking if they had received any paperwork from appellant. Two members of Bott's staff replied they had not received any documentation from appellant. N.T. p. 117; AA Ex. 12.

34. On November 13, 2025, appellant responded to her prior August 13, 2025 email chain with Southers, wherein Southers had instructed her a shift commander would be calling appellant regarding her doctor's note. Appellant informed Southers,

> I have tried to call in this morning! I never heard from anyone inside of the jail with an update. I do [sic] turn in a new pink form to someone in HR a while ago but when I heard from Mrs. Hower, no one had this form? I assume it has been lost. Do I need to get another one filled out? Thank you!

N.T. pp. 59-60; AA Ex. 19.

35. Southers replied to appellant's message on November 13, 2025, informing appellant she needed to contact Bott. She further verified Bott's number was in service, despite appellant's claim to the contrary. N.T. pp. 59-60; AA Ex. 19.

36. Appellant's first full day of AW, or unapproved absence, was July 24, 2025. She remained on AW until her date of termination on October 24, 2025. N.T. pp. 97-98; AA Ex. 6.

37. Department of Corrections Code of Ethics, Section B #21 provides,

> An employee who knows that he/she will be unable to report for duty due to illness, emergency, or injury shall immediately notify his/her supervisor in accordance with their local policy, advising the supervisor of the nature of the injury, emergency, or illness and the expected date of return to duty.

AA. Ex. 2.

38. Appellant signed that she received, reviewed, and agreed to abide by the Department of Corrections Code of Ethics Handbook on October 28, 2024. N.T. pp. 90-92; AA Ex. 3.

39. Section 44B of SCI Camp Hill Policy 4.1.1 CAM, relating to "Reporting Off From Normal Working Duties," provides, in relevant part,

> 1. 24 hour operations must call **at least two (2) hours in advance** of their scheduled shift to their designated supervisor:
>
>   - Corrections Officers – Junior Shift Commander [. . .]
>
> 2. CIVEA covered employees will contact Control prior to the start of the shift to report off from work.
>
> 3. All other staff must contact their immediate supervisor **directly** at the institution at the start of the supervisor's work day. In the event an employee's supervisor is not available, then the employee will notify the next appropriate person in their chain of command.

AA Ex. 4 (emphasis in original).

40. Section 44E of SCI Camp Hill Policy 4.1.1 CAM, relating to "AWOL/Tardy", provides, in relevant part,

> The State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill recognizes it has the responsibility to operate in an efficient and professional manner. Employees are responsible for managing their leave and reporting for duty on time, remaining at work until properly relieved and released, and being absent from work only with notice, approval;

> and with accessible and appropriate authorized leave quotas to use for the requested absences. The employer encourages and promotes employees to report on time and remain at work. When they do not, it places into operation a form of corrective measures, which may include various levels of discipline, to discourage further abuse.

AA Ex. 4.

41. Under the established procedures enumerated under Section 44E, subsection B provides,

> Corrective action for Absent Without Leave for an entire shift or more may begin with a reprimand or higher level of action based on the merits of the case. Absent Without Leave for probationary employees is egregious and may be cause for higher levels of corrective measures or dismissal, based on the merits of the case.

AA Ex. 4.

DISCUSSION

At issue before the Commission is whether the appointing authority's decision to remove appellant from her Corrections Officer Trainee employment was motivated by any discriminatory factor. Appellant alleges she was discriminated against based on sex due to her pregnancy. Comm. Ex. B.

Appellant testified on her own behalf. The appointing authority presented the testimony of Field Human Resource Officer Jennifer Bott,[2] Human Resource Analyst 1 Shari Southers,[3] and Major of the Guard Kevin Bly.[4]

Before this Commission, a probationary employee can only challenge her removal through Section 3003(7)(ii) of Act 71 of 2018 based upon an allegation of discrimination affecting the involved personnel action; in an appeal alleging discrimination, the burden lies with the appellant. *Nosko v. Somerset State Hospital*, 139 Pa. Commw. 367, 370-371, 590 A.2d. 844, 846 (1991); 71 Pa.C.S.A. §3003(7)(ii); 4 Pa. Code §105.16.

[2] Bott has worked as a Field Human Resource Officer for the appointing authority, covering Region 8, since May 2021. N.T. p. 83. Region 8 includes SCI Camp Hill. N.T. p. 86. In that position, Bott is responsible for managing all human resource functions as they relate to field office work. *Id*.

[3] Southers works for the appointing authority as an HR Analyst 1. N.T. p. 136. She has worked in that position since February 2016. *Id*. In that capacity, Southers works as the recruitment manager for SCI Camp Hill, as well as handles workers' compensation and modified duty for employees. N.T. p. 137.

[4] Major Bly has worked for the appointing authority for seventeen and a half years. N.T. p. 161. In his capacity as Major of the Guard, Major Bly oversees the daily operations of the security, staffing and safety of the institution. N.T. p. 162.

Section 2704 of Act 71 of 2018 prohibits discrimination. Specifically, Section 2704 of Act 71 of 2018 provides:

> An officer or employee of the Commonwealth may not discriminate against an individual in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention or any other personnel action with respect to the classified service because of race, gender, religion, disability or political, partisan or labor union affiliation or other nonmerit factors.

71 Pa.C.S. § 2704. The provisions of Section 2704 are substantially the same as the provisions in Section 905.1 of Act 286 (71 P.S. § 741.905a), and both sections of the respective acts use virtually the same language.[5] This includes prohibiting both procedural and traditional discrimination which encompasses claims based upon non-merit factors. *Price v. Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging*, 672 A.2d 409, 411 n. 4 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1996); *Pronko v. Department of Revenue*, 114 Pa. Commw. Ct. 428, 539 A.2d 462 (1988); 71 P.S. § 2704. Here, appellant has alleged traditional discrimination. Comm. Ex. B.

In claims of traditional discrimination, the appellant must prove a *prima facie* case of discrimination by producing sufficient evidence which, if believed and otherwise unexplained, indicates it is more likely than not discrimination has occurred. *Henderson v. Office of the Budget*, 126 Pa. Commw. Ct. 607, 560 A.2d 859 (1989); *Department of Health v. Nwogwugwu*, 141 Pa. Commw. Ct. 33, 594

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[5] Section 905.1- Prohibition of Discrimination, provided:

> No officer or employe[e] of the Commonwealth shall discriminate against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action with respect to the classified service because of political or religious opinions or affiliations because of labor union affiliations or because of race, national origin, or other non-merit factors.

A.2d 847 (1991). Once a *prima facie* case of discrimination has been established, the burden shifts to the appointing authority to present a legitimate, non-discriminatory explanation for the employment action. Appellant always retains the ultimate burden of persuasion and must demonstrate the proffered merit reason is merely a pretext for discrimination. *Henderson* at 126 Pa. Commw. Ct. 607, 560 A.2d 859.

Appellant alleges the appointing authority's decision to remove her from her Corrections Officer Trainee employment was based on sex discrimination. Specifically, appellant alleges the appointing authority removed her due to her pregnancy.

Appellant began working for the appointing authority as a Corrections Officer Trainee in October 2024. *See* Findings of Fact No. 5. The appointing authority charged appellant with being on unauthorized absences since July 24, 2025, and not contacting the appointing authority since August 20, 2025. *See* Findings of Fact No. 3.

On July 16, 2025, appellant submitted a doctor's note from UPMC Urgent Care to the appointing authority, providing appellant could not sit or stand for prolonged periods. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 10-11. Additionally, appellant's doctor restricted her from carrying Oleoresin Capsicum (hereinafter "OC") spray. *See* Findings of Fact No. 11.

The appointing authority notified appellant her restrictions could not be accommodated at that time. *See* Findings of Fact No. 14. Deputy Superintendent Jason Albert clarified that being able to carry OC spray was a condition of appellant's employment. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 15-16. Appellant did not report back to work in July 2025 following the submission of her doctor's note on July 16, 2025. N.T. p. 149.

On August 13, 2025, appellant submitted a second doctor's note to the appointing authority. *See* Findings of Fact 18. The note indicated appellant was pregnant and could return to work on modified work duty. *See* Findings of Fact No. 19. Upon receiving this note, Major Kevin Bly emailed appellant with instructions concerning her return to work. *See* Findings of Fact No. 21. He instructed appellant to complete the return-to-work paperwork attached to his email, sent on August 13, 2025, before the appointing authority could render a decision on her request for modified duty. *Id*.

Appellant remained out of work throughout the month of August 2025. N.T. p. 155. During the period of August 13 through 20, 2025, the appointing authority repeatedly attempted to contact appellant regarding the status of her return-to-work paperwork. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 22-25. Captain Jeffrey Elwell managed to reach appellant via telephone on August 20, 2025, and appellant picked up her required paperwork from the appointing authority that same day. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 23-24.

Field Human Resource Officer Jennifer Bott became aware of appellant's pregnancy restrictions through a forwarded email on August 13, 2025 regarding appellant's need to complete return-to-work paperwork. N.T. p. 111; AA

Ex. 11. As of August 26, 2025, Bott still did not have any record of appellant submitting any paperwork or contacting the appointing authority since picking up her paperwork in person from Captain Elwell on August 20, 2025. *See* Findings of Fact No. 27. She reiterated these findings to Equal Opportunity Specialist Eileen Hower via email on September 3, 2025 and September 25, 2025. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 30, 31. On October 21, 2025, Hower reached out to Bott concerning a voicemail appellant left her concerning her paperwork. *See* Findings of Fact No. 32. After checking with her staff, Bott again confirmed no one with the appointing authority had received any paperwork from appellant. *See* Findings of Fact No. 33.

Appellant's first full day of unapproved absence was July 24, 2025. *See* Findings of Fact No. 36. She remained on unapproved absence until her date of termination on October 24, 2025. *Id.* Following her termination, appellant reached out to the appointing authority on November 13, 2025, inquiring as to the status of her return-to-work form. *See* Finding of Fact No. 34.

In her case-in-chief, appellant acknowledged the doctor's note from UPMC she turned in to Southers on July 16, 2025 only referenced her medical restrictions, and that it did not indicate she was pregnant. N.T. p. 48. Appellant further acknowledged it was not until she emailed the second doctor's note to Southers on August 13, 2025, that her modified work duty request directly indicated she was pregnant. N.T. p. 49. After her submission of her second note to the appointing authority, appellant understood she needed to complete paperwork for the appointing authority to evaluate her ability to return to work. N.T. p. 50.

Appellant denied receiving any emails from Major Bly with the required paperwork. *Id.* However, appellant recalled speaking with Captain Elwell and picking up her paperwork on the same day, August 20, 2025, in person at the facility. N.T. pp. 52-53.

Appellant testified she received the return-to-work paperwork at least twice. N.T. p. 54. She stated she received the first packet to complete from Southers, which she claims she also directly handed back in to Southers. N.T. p. 55. For the second set of paperwork, appellant argues she handed it in to the appointing authority on August 21, 2025. N.T. p. 54. She was not sure if she handed the paperwork in to Southers, explaining someone at the front desk informed her the person she handed it to, a brunette, was named Shari. N.T. pp. 56-57, 117-118.

On November 13, 2025, appellant emailed Southers saying she tried to call the appointing authority, and she never heard an update. She asked if she needed to turn in another form. N.T. p. 59. Southers instructed appellant to contact Bott. *Id*. When appellant stated the number wasn't in service, Southers responded that she tested the number herself, and it was in fact working. *Id*. Appellant got in contact with Bott in November 2025. N.T. p. 60. She informed Bott she never received the Pre-Disciplinary Conference (hereinafter "PDC") Notice,[6] and Bott sent the electronic copy of her termination letter. *Id*.

[6] Appellant testified she did not attend her PDC because she did not receive the PDC Notice. N.T. p. 58. She explained a unit address was listed on the PDC letter which should not have been there. N.T. pp. 61-62. Of note, appellant does not raise the issue of procedural discrimination in her appeal to the Commission. For example, she did not allege she did not have an opportunity to respond to the charges due to her failure to receive the PDC Notice, or that she would have presented evidence at the PDC to dispute the charges. Even so, the appointing authority presented testimony that the address used on the PDC Notice was what they had on record through the Employee Self-Service portal. N.T. pp. 89-90. Appellant had access to ESS and was responsible for keeping the address accurate.

Following the presentation of appellant's case-in-chief, the appointing authority made a Motion to Dismiss for failure to establish a *prima facie* case. N.T. p. 115. Ruling on the Motion was deferred pending review by the full Commission. N.T. p. 116. Following our review, the Motion is hereby granted. In so ruling, the Commission finds credible the testimony of the appointing authority's witnesses.[7]

Appellant did not present any evidence the appointing authority knew or had notice of appellant's pregnancy at the time of the relevant employment action. The initial note appellant provided in July 2025 did not reference her pregnancy, per appellant's own admission. While appellant asserted the appointing authority was already aware of her pregnancy prior to the note's submission, she did not submit any evidence in support of her assertion. Namely, appellant did not present any evidence she otherwise informed the appointing authority of her pregnancy at the time they denied the OC spray restriction. It was not until a month later in August 2025, while appellant was already absent from work, that the appointing authority became aware of appellant's pregnancy. Southers and Major Bly testified they were not made aware of appellant's pregnancy before she submitted the note on August 12, 2025. N.T. pp. 151, 165-168. Bott testified she was never directly told by appellant that she was pregnant prior to August, and that she was only made aware of appellant's pregnancy through the second doctor's note. N.T. pp. 133-134. Once they became aware of her pregnancy, the appointing authority immediately asked appellant to complete return-to-work paperwork so she could work on modified duty.

[7] It is within the purview of the Commission to determine the credibility of the witnesses. *State Correctional Institution at Graterford, Department of Corrections v. Jordan*, 505 A.2d 339, 341 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1986).

Appellant did not present any evidence she turned in the required paperwork to the appointing authority, other than her uncorroborated statement she did so. Major Bly, Southers, and Bott all credibly testified they did not receive appellant's completed return-to-work paperwork at any point. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 25, 27, 33. While appellant claimed she submitted her paperwork to a brunette in the human resources office, Bott asserted she was the only brunette working in the office during the period at issue, and she never received paperwork from appellant. N.T. pp. 117-118. Additionally, appellant remained unresponsive to the appointing authority's attempts to reach her through November 2025, when she received notice of her termination. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 22, 30-31. There is no evidence connecting appellant's termination action to her pregnancy. Instead, appellant's termination resulted from her ongoing absence without leave, as well as her unresponsiveness and failure to participate in the return-to-work process.

Even if appellant had established a *prima facie* case of pregnancy discrimination, the appointing authority presented legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons for her termination. Witnesses for the appointing authority all testified the use of OC Spray was an essential function of the job as a COT, and appellant was notified the restriction could not be accommodated. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 15-16. Southers informed appellant she would be off on her own leave until she could get the restriction lifted and/or return full duty. N.T. pp. 144-145. Appellant did not make anyone aware of her pregnancy until the second note was received in August 2025. Major Bly testified they discussed accommodations for appellant if she returned the paperwork, and that they had numerous locations to accommodate employees. N.T. p. 173. Nonetheless, appellant did not return the paperwork to anyone in the facility, nor did she return to work. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 25, 27-31.

Appellant remained absent from work without authorization and without leave, and she only reached back out to the appointing authority in November 2025, after she had already been terminated. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 28, 34-36. Bott testified ongoing absence without leave for a probationary employee is an egregious violation of policy, and a termination is usually implemented after five consecutive days of unapproved absence. N.T. pp. 93-95; *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 39-41. Additionally, appellant demonstrated continued undependability through her failure to contact the employer, return phone calls, or provide completed documentation. N.T. p. 95. Her actions constituted job abandonment when she disappeared without contacting the appointing authority from August through November 2025, despite numerous attempts to reach her by appointing authority staff. *See* Findings of Fact Nos. 22, 27, 31. Thus, the appointing authority had legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons in support of appellant's termination.

Appellant presented no evidence or corroborating testimony in support of her assertion of sex discrimination. Thus, the Commission finds appellant has not presented a *prima facie* case of discrimination based upon her sex. The burden of establishing a *prima facie* case cannot be an onerous one. *Nwogwugwu*, *supra.* Discrimination cannot be inferred and there must be factual support to sustain the allegations. *Price, supra*. Here, appellant has not established there was any causal connection between her sex and her removal. *Henderson, supra*. Accordingly, we enter the following:

CONCLUSION OF LAW

Appellant has not presented evidence establishing discrimination violative of Section 2704 of Act 71 of 2018.

ORDER

AND NOW, the State Civil Service Commission, by agreement of its members, dismisses the appeal of Hope E. Brueland challenging her removal from probationary Corrections Officer Trainee employment, with the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Department of Corrections and sustains the action of the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, Department of Corrections in removing appellant from her probationary Corrections Officer Trainee employment.

State Civil Service Commission

Maria P. Donatucci
Chairwoman

Gregory M. Lane
Commissioner

Pamela M. Iovino
Commissioner

Issued: September 22, 2026