COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Lauren C. Daman	:	State Civil Service Commission
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission	:	Appeal No. 31755

Lauren C. Daman	Robert Taylor
Pro Se	Attorney for Appointing Authority

ADJUDICATION

This is an appeal by Lauren C. Daman challenging her forced resignation[1] from regular Human Resource Director employment with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. A hearing was held on June 3, 2026, via video, before Commissioner Pamela M. Iovino.

The Commissioners have reviewed the Notes of Testimony and exhibits introduced at the hearing, as well as the Briefs submitted by the parties. The issues before the Commission are: 1) whether there is just cause for appellant's permanent separation; and 2) whether appellant established the permanent separation was the result of discrimination.

[1] A forced resignation constitutes a permanent separation. 71 Pa.C.S. § 2601(2). A regular status employee, such as appellant, who is challenging their permanent separation from employment is entitled to a hearing under 71 Pa.C.S. § 3003(7)(i). *See e.g.*, *Samuel* v. *State Civil Service Commission,* 104 Pa. Commw. 474, 522 A.2d 163 (1987). Therefore, the challenged action will be referred to as a "permanent separation" within this Adjudication.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. By letter dated January 21, 2026, appellant was informed the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (hereinafter "appointing authority") intended to remove her from her position as Human Resource Director, regular status, effective January 22, 2026. Comm. Ex. A.

2. In the January 21, 2026 letter, the appointing authority informed appellant she could resign in lieu of removal. Comm. Ex. A.

3. By email dated January 21, 2026 at 10:01 p.m., appellant resigned, writing in pertinent part:

> …This decision is being made as a result of my option to resign or be terminated. This option has left me no choice but to do a forced resignation….

Comm. Ex. B (p. 13).

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

5. Appellant was employed by the appointing authority as the Human Resource Director. Comm. Ex. A.

6. By letter dated October 27, 2025, appellant was informed of an ongoing investigation regarding her work performance, for which a virtual fact-finding meeting was scheduled that same day. AA Ex. 5.

7. In or around November 2025, appellant and other individuals were interviewed as part of the ongoing investigation. N.T. p. 29.

8. At the conclusion of the investigation, the findings were forwarded to appellant's supervisor, who determined the discipline to be imposed. N.T. p. 31.

DISCUSSION

By email dated January 21, 2026, appellant permanently separated from her position as the appointing authority's Human Resource Director. Comm. Ex. B (p. 13). Appellant challenged her permanent separation under Sections 3003(7)(i) and (ii) of Act 71 of 2018 (hereinafter "the Act").[2] 71 Pa.C.S. §§ 3003(7)(i), (ii).

[2] Act of June 28, 2018, P.L. 460, No. 71, § 1.

The issues before the Commission are: 1) whether the appointing authority established just cause for the permanent separation; and 2) whether appellant established the permanent separation was the result of discrimination.

In support of its charge, the appointing authority presented the testimony of Interim Chief Counsel Stephanie M. Chapman.[3] Appellant did not testify on her own behalf or present any other witnesses.[4] The evidence provided by the parties has been reviewed by the Commission and is summarized below.

Appellant served as the appointing authority's Human Resource Director. Comm. Ex. A. By letter dated October 27, 2025, appellant was informed of an ongoing investigation regarding her work performance. N.T. p. 21; AA Ex. 5. The October 27, 2025 letter also informed appellant that a virtual fact-finding meeting was scheduled for noon that same day, at which she would have an opportunity to respond to the allegations set forth in the letter.[5] AA Ex. 5.

In or around November 2025, Interim Chief Counsel Stephanie M. Chapman was directed to investigate the allegations related to appellant's work performance. N.T. pp. 27-29, 35; AA Ex. 5. As part of the investigation, appellant

[3] Chapman is employed by the appointing authority as the Interim Chief Counsel. N.T. p. 18. She has held that position for three months and has been employed by the Commonwealth for twenty-eight years. N.T. p. 18. Chapman was responsible for conducting the investigation that led to the appointing authority's decision to remove appellant. N.T. pp. 27, 35.

[4] Although appellant introduced two exhibits without objection, the Commission has excluded them from its analysis for lack of foundational support.

[5] Appellant objected to the admission of the October 27, 2025 letter, arguing the date was incorrect. N.T. p. 22. Appellant asserted the fact-finding meeting occurred in December not October. N.T. pp. 22, 24. No testimony from either party clarified the date of the fact-finding meeting.

and individuals impacted by appellant's alleged actions or inactions were interviewed. N.T. p. 29. At the conclusion of the investigation, the findings were forwarded to appellant's supervisor, who determined the discipline to be imposed. N.T. p. 31.

By letter dated January 21, 2026, the appointing authority informed appellant that it intended to remove her from her position effective the following day, January 22, 2026. Comm. Ex. A. By that same letter, the appointing authority offered appellant the option to resign from her position in lieu of removal. Comm. Ex. A. It is unclear whether a pre-disciplinary conference was held before the appointing authority decided to remove appellant. Nor is there any evidence in the record establishing the appointing authority offered appellant the option to resign before informing her it intended to terminate her.

After receiving the January 21, 2026 letter, appellant resigned in lieu of removal. Comm. Ex. B (p. 13). By email dated January 21, 2026 at 10:01 p.m., appellant wrote in pertinent part:

> …This decision is being made as a result of my option to resign or be terminated. This option has left me no choice but to do a forced resignation….

Comm. Ex. B (p. 13).

Under Section 3003(7)(i) of Act 71, a regular status employee may appeal a permanent separation from the classified service. 71 Pa.C.S. § 3003(7)(i). An employee may be permanently separated from the classified service through rejection on probation, retirement, resignation, or removal. 71 Pa.C.S. § 2601(2).

Here, there is no dispute appellant resigned from her position as Human Resource Director, thereby permanently separating from the classified service. There is also no dispute that appellant was forced to choose either resignation or removal. Comm. Ex. A.

Pursuant to Section 612.8 of the Office of Administration's Civil Service Reform Regulations, notice of resignation shall consist of a ***voluntary*** termination of employment evidenced by an affirmative statement, either written or oral, of the employee's intent to resign. 4 Pa. Code § 612.8 (emphasis added). Based on the undisputed choice forced upon appellant in the January 21, 2026 letter, it is clear her resignation was not voluntary, thereby resulting in constructive removal from her position. Comm. Ex. A. Thus, the question before this Commission is whether the appointing authority established just cause for removal.

As a regular status employee, appellant was granted a hearing under Section 3003(7)(i) of Act 71. In a hearing under this section, the appointing authority bears the burden of establishing that there was just cause for the removal. 71 Pa.C.S. §§ 2607, 3003(7)(i); 4 Pa. Code § 105.15. Factors supporting the just cause removal of a civil service employee must be related to the employee's job performance and touch in some logical manner upon the employee's competency and ability to perform their job duties. *Woods v. State Civil Service Commission,* 590 Pa. Commw. 337, 912 A.2d 803 (2006). The Commission finds the appointing authority failed to satisfy its burden.

No credible, non-hearsay evidence was presented by the appointing authority regarding the reasons for the removal.[6] Additionally, although Chapman testified her findings included information provided by appellant, the record lacks evidence of any party-opponent statements by appellant that would substantiate the charges. N.T. p. 33. As such, the appointing authority is unable to establish meritorious criteria related to appellant's competency and ability to perform her job duties. Therefore, the Commission finds that the appointing authority has failed to establish just cause for appellant's removal. Having determined the appointing authority failed to establish just cause, the Commission will dispense with a review of appellant's discrimination claims as it is not required. Accordingly, the Commission enters the following:

CONCLUSION OF LAW

The appointing authority has failed to present evidence establishing just cause for removal under Section 2607 of Act 71 of 2018.

ORDER

AND NOW, the State Civil Service Commission, by agreement of two of its members,[7] sustains the appeal of Lauren C. Daman challenging her forced resignation from regular Human Resource Director employment with the

[6] 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).

[7] Chairwoman Maria P. Donatucci did not participate in the decision on this appeal.

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and overrules the action of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in the forced resignation of Lauren C. Daman from regular Human Resource Director employment. We order that the forced resignation be expunged from appellant's record and appellant be returned to regular Human Resource Director employment within thirty (30) calendar days with reimbursement of wages and emoluments since January 22, 2026, less wages earned and benefits received under the Public Laws of Pennsylvania as established by a sworn statement to be submitted by appellant. We further order that within thirty (30) calendar days of the mailed date of this opinion, the appointing authority shall submit written notice of compliance with this Order to the Executive Director of the State Civil Service Commission.

State Civil Service Commission

Gregory M. Lane
Commissioner

Pamela M. Iovino
Commissioner

Issued: October 22, 2026