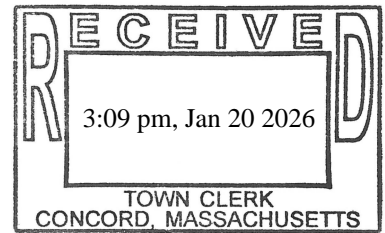


**BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP  
MINUTES**



**Tuesday, January 6, 2026  
6:00 p.m.  
55 Church Street & Zoom Video Conference**

**Attendees:** Sandeep Pisharody, Daniel Hart, Debbie Dorfman, Paul Boehm

**Guests:** Brian Farber (online), Dr. Carlos Hoyt Jr.

**1. Call to Order 6:00**

**2. Public Comments- no public comments**

No comments at this time.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hart motioned to approve the minutes of December 15, 2025

Ms. Dorfman seconded

All in favor: Mr. Pisharody, Mr. Hart, Ms. Dorfman and Mr. Boehm

**4. Discuss Focus Group Effort**

Ms. Dorfman shared an update on the focus groups she is organizing. Focus Group 1 is scheduled for January 13 from 5:30–7:30 PM at the Harvey Wheeler building, with 20 total slots and 6 people currently signed up, leaving ample availability. Though the advertised sign-up deadline lists January 2, late sign-ups are still being accepted to avoid discouraging participation. A second focus group is planned for late January or early February, pending room scheduling at the library and renewed advertising. There has been growing interest, including at least one person who plans to attend the second session instead.

Mr. Pisharody noted that he promoted the focus group at the last School Committee meeting, which received positive feedback and may lead to additional sign-ups. He plans to mention it again at an upcoming meeting (January 7, 2026). The focus group is also being advertised through multiple channels, including *The Concord Bridge* and the Town's website calendar, and was confirmed to be posted as of the previous day despite some holiday-related delays.

It was agreed that the deadline of January 2, 2026 for signing up would be removed so not to discourage the community from joining. Ms. Begley was tasked to update the focus group description that is posted on the website.

**5. Discuss "ConcordSafe" Initiative- Brian Farber**

Mr. Boehm explained that the DEI Commission has long been engaged in issues around incident reporting and response. In response to recent events and increased community concern, particularly following the ADL situation, a working group was formed to address the community's desire for information and action. However, a full reporting system will take several months to develop, likely not launching until mid-year. As an interim, transitional step, Mr. Farber, a member of the DEI Commission, proposed launching ConcordSafe.

Mr. Farber explained that recent incidents of antisemitism and racism prompted the creation of ConcordSafe, an interim awareness campaign aimed at shifting community culture around bias and hate. The initiative is a brand and rallying

point, not a formal reporting system, with ConcordSafe.org redirecting to ConcordMA.gov. Over time, it may be incorporated into a future town-wide reporting system.

Currently, the school district has a bias reporting system, but awareness is low; the police and town systems lack bias-specific reporting, and the DEI Commission provides email contact. The campaign seeks to build community identity, raise awareness of reporting options, support residents, and promote DEI programming.

Outreach includes a QR-coded sticker linking to a landing page with resources, emphasizing that emergencies should be reported to 911. Student-led engagement and internal rollout in town offices and schools are priorities, with future expansion to businesses, libraries, and community partners. Feedback highlighted support for the initiative but noted concerns about messaging and the “ConcordSafe” name.

Mr. Farber noted the recent launch of **#YouBelongInConcord**, highlighted in Ms. Begley’s inclusion newsletter. He noted that this initiative had originally been proposed in 2024 and is a more robust, well-developed program that aligns closely with the goals of ConcordSafe. After discussions with Andrea Foncerrada (DEI Commission co-chair), Mr. Farber suggested that ConcordSafe could potentially become a component of the You Belong in Concord initiative rather than serve as the lead effort. He also noted that You Belong in Concord may be more positively received by businesses and already includes strong ideas developed by the DEI Commission that stalled previously due to limited capacity. He and Andrea plan to meet to explore how the two initiatives could be integrated and better aligned.

Mr. Boehm described ConcordSafe as a pilot to explore key questions around bias and hate reporting and to inform a future unified reporting system, while noting the need to coordinate with related initiatives to avoid confusion. Mr. Farber added that ConcordSafe serves as a timely, centralized resource to raise awareness and guide residents to existing reporting options, laying the groundwork for a future system.

Mr. Pisharody strongly supported the concept, emphasizing that a simple, memorable landing page lowers barriers, increases awareness, and helps residents understand where and how to report concerns. He noted that ConcordSafe does not need to be a reporting tool itself to be effective.

Other members echoed that ConcordSafe could serve as an entryway within a broader, layered approach that includes awareness-building, communication, and response. PB concluded by stressing that education, communication, trust, and responsiveness—not just forms or technology—are central to the town’s efforts, and that aligning these initiatives thoughtfully will be most beneficial for the community.

## **6. Conversation with Dr. Carlos Hoyt Jr.**

Mr. Boehm introduced Dr. Carlos Hoyt Jr. as the featured speaker for the meeting, emphasizing the importance of grounding the group’s work in broader context and research. He explained that the working group had identified a need for deeper understanding, framing, and perspective to guide its efforts. PB highlighted Dr. Hoyt’s extensive experience as an author, educator, and DEI consultant working with businesses and schools, and thanked him for providing preparatory materials. He then turned the discussion over to Dr. Hoyt to lead the conversation.

Dr. Carlos Hoyt Jr. thanked the group and shared his personal connection to Concord, recounting a social bias incident he experienced locally several years ago and the meaningful, empathetic response he received from residents. That experience led to ongoing collaboration with the town and reinforced his belief that, while imperfect, Concord is genuinely trying to do the work of inclusion.

Given limited time, Dr. Hoyt explained that he provided the working group with materials ahead of the meeting to encourage reflection and dialogue rather than a one-way presentation. His primer highlighted key elements of the group’s charge and work plan, offering strengths, recommendations, and discussion prompts.

He raised several core themes for consideration:

- The need to clearly distinguish between hate incidents and social bias or microaggressions, especially when designing a reporting system.
- The importance of “doing inclusivity inclusively,” ensuring that anti-bias efforts address all forms of social bias, regardless of which group is most visibly impacted at a given time.
- The challenge and necessity of coordination across schools, town departments, and the broader community to avoid siloed efforts.
- The value of not only tracking harmful incidents, but also uplifting and documenting positive, pro-social experiences that strengthen community connection.

Dr. Hoyt framed his role as a “critical friend,” offering supportive but honest feedback to help ensure the work remains focused on outcomes rather than becoming attached to specific tools or approaches. He encouraged ongoing self-reflection and adaptability.

He initiated a structured “go-round” discussion, giving each member a chance to share reflections, questions, or ideas from the primer, followed by open discussion with the full group, emphasizing inclusivity and shared dialogue.

Several members of the working group shared reflections on Dr. Hoyt’s primer and the broader direction of the work:

- Mr. Hart, with prior experience at ADL, appreciated the materials and raised questions about prioritizing a reporting system versus focusing first on education, programming, and engagement. He emphasized that reporting is important for data and accountability but only works if people trust and use the system. He also expressed interest in exploring the distinctions between personal and social identity raised in the primer.
- Mr. Boehm reflected on his long history in Concord, his background as an engineer, and the recent shock of learning about antisemitism through the ADL complaint. He explained that the Select Board created a two-track approach: the DEI Commission would focus on community engagement and education, while the Select Board would take responsibility for developing a reporting system. For PB, data and measurement are essential to understanding trends and accountability, even while recognizing that reporting is only one part of a much larger inclusion effort.
- Mr. Pisharody, a school committee member and first-generation immigrant, shared how his children’s experiences motivated his involvement. He emphasized that belonging is central and that a reporting tool can help the town understand where it stands. He also strongly supported Dr. Hoyt’s suggestion to document positive, pro-social experiences alongside negative incidents, noting that doing so can provide hope and balance.
- Ms. Begley acknowledged she had not read all the materials but agreed with the broader message that this work must start small, fit into a bigger picture, and grow into something adaptive and sustainable. She expressed confidence that Concord is ready to move forward.
- Ms. Dorfman, a disability justice attorney with personal experience of antisemitism, highlighted the importance of true inclusivity. She appreciated Dr. Hoyt’s emphasis on ensuring the effort is clearly about addressing bias affecting all communities, not just antisemitism, so everyone feels they belong and are equally valued.

Dr. Hoyt encouraged that public to also say something, public comments were entertained at this point.

Ms. Naomi Rosenfeld raised a key concern that simply collecting data is not enough to demonstrate that the town truly cares. Without follow-up, accountability, and efforts to understand and address root causes, a reporting system risks becoming meaningless numbers and could signal indifference rather than commitment with Dr. Hoyt responding by emphasizing the balance between downstream responses (reacting to incidents) and upstream prevention (addressing root causes). He warned that focusing only on reactive systems can unintentionally normalize harm, underscoring the importance of pairing reporting with proactive, preventative work.

Mr. Michael Williams, a school committee member, echoed concerns about reporting systems that only capture negative experiences. He suggested that system design could allow for documenting both “striving and thriving,” while also noting the importance of representative sampling. Reflecting on decades in Concord, he observed that while bias

has long existed, there is now a stronger, more intentional desire to measure issues in service of making the community better.

Ms. Rose Cratsley, co-chair of the DEI Commission, shared a perspective rooted in lived experience as the daughter of immigrants and a multigenerational Concord resident. She emphasized holding space for both pain and possibility, centering hope, and working collaboratively to redesign systems so they better serve all members of the community. Overall, the discussion reinforced that any reporting effort must be paired with meaningful action, prevention, and community partnership to build trust, accountability, and lasting change.

Dr. Hoyt opened a reflective discussion about “where do we go from here,” emphasizing transparency, honest disagreement, and the importance of surfacing different perspectives. He noted that the town already has some data, from past DEI Commission surveys and recent ADL-related concerns, showing that bias incidents are occurring. However, he cautioned that collecting more data without clear, simultaneous response mechanisms can feel dismissive and erode trust, particularly for impacted communities.

The discussion highlighted gaps in current reporting systems, which focus on severe incidents, leaving everyday bias and microaggressions underreported. Participants emphasized capturing these experiences, pairing reporting with response, education, and prevention, and using clear, accessible language. Ongoing community engagement, trust-building, and input from those most affected were identified as essential.

Dr. Hoyt encouraged flexibility and adapting the original vision as needed, stressing thoughtful leadership over rushed action. CHJ and PB noted the working group and reporting system are part of a broader DEI strategy, addressing information gaps, measuring progress, and informing preventive efforts, rather than solving all problems.

Overall, the conversation emphasized:

- The need for careful, informed action over speed.
- DEI work is iterative, building on existing knowledge while seeking preventive strategies.
- Trust and credibility are central missteps that can erode community confidence.
- The reporting system is a tool, part of a larger, ongoing effort to improve inclusion and measure both problems and progress in Concord.

The conversation concluded with a recognition that the agenda had been covered and a call for any further public comment.

## **7. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for January 15th, with two guest speakers expected: Court Booth and a representative from the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Commission, as well as Antonia Thompson from the District Attorney’s office.

Mr. Boehm noted that the meeting will shift focus toward analyzing information gathered from the focus groups and beginning to answer outstanding questions. The group remains on track to develop a reporting system, though the final name and how the town will use the information will be discussed further. The meeting was then adjourned.

## **8. Adjournment: 7:34pm**