

CITY OF HARTFORD PENSION UNIT MEMORANDUM

To: Nicole Plessy-Cloud, Plan Administrator

From: Sabri Akter

Date: June 18, 2026

Re: Formal Grievance – Promotion Denial, Policy Non-Compliance, and Unfair Treatment/Discrimination

1. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this email is to file a formal grievance regarding the recent denial of my promotion to Assistant Plan Administrator (APA). This decision, made by the Treasurer, is inconsistent with my documented performance, directly contradicts my supervisor's (Nicole Plessy-Cloud) evaluations, and violates Pension Commission policy regarding annual reviews. Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding this denial and the bypassing of a qualified merit raise that was not granted in connection with the evaluation causes serious concerns including disparate treatment and discrimination based on race and gender.

2. Background and Qualifications

I have dedicated almost seven years to this department, consistently performing at an exemplary level.

- **Performance Evaluations:** I have received three formal performance evaluations during my tenure. In every single evaluation, my performance was rated as **"Exceeded Expectations"**
- **Supervisor Advocacy:** My direct supervisor, the Plan Administrator, who manages the daily operations of our department, has repeatedly vouched for my capabilities in all areas. Nicole has explicitly stated that I possess the necessary managerial, supervisory, and operational skills required for this promotion, even noting that I am fully capable of stepping into her own role. This information was stated in the performance evaluation as well. My colleagues in the department also view me as the "go to" person for this unit. In Nicole's absence, I have performed not only my duties as the Senior Member Specialist and Assistant Plan Administrator, but also as the Plan Administrator by ensuring that the office continues to function and operate without any interruptions. Again, demonstrating my ability to lead and perform at a managerial level, which speaks to the depths of my knowledge of not only the pension plans, but also my ability to perform the duties of the Assistant Plan Administrator.

- **Time Performing the Functions of the APA:** I took on the role of APA when the Pension Commission made Nicole the acting Plan Administrator in December of 2022. I have consistently done the work since then. In August of 2024 (approximately) Nicole advocated for me to be in an acting role of the APA and to be compensated accordingly. The Treasurer was enthusiastic and was provided with a list of responsibilities that I had taken on. When Nicole followed up, the Treasurer had a completely different response and Nicole advised me to talk to the Treasurer and advocate for myself. Subsequently as time passed, Nicole attempted to follow up with the Treasurer about promoting me permanently to the position however her attempts at receiving a response went unanswered. I personally went to advocate for myself on November 13, 2024 regarding the Assistant Plan Administrator role. In this conversation, I was told that I am making good money at my age and that I should be content with my position at that time. She did acknowledge that I was working beyond the Senior Member Services Specialist job and working outside of my job duties. I did give her a bullet list of duties I do outside of my role and she just responded saying "I know". She told me that I had already been promoted twice, although as the facts state, I had one promotion in September of 2022, from my initial date of hire in August 2019. It was clear at this point she got upset with me since she began to raise her voice at me after I attempted to correct her statement that I had not in fact been promoted twice. She slammed her iPad on the table and told me not to "argue with her" and I replied by saying "I am not arguing, I am only providing the accurate information". To end the conversation, she told me that there is nothing else to talk about and that she will post the position of Assistant Plan Administrator job and let me know when it will be posted so I can apply for it.

After all of my supervisor's attempts to receive a response from the Treasurer went unanswered, she proceeded with submitting a formal evaluation in October of 2025. After several attempts to follow up with the Treasurer, the evaluation was scheduled on December 29, 2025. My evaluation was conducted with the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer and without my supervisor. Nicole once again made several attempts to follow up with the Treasurer on the status of finalizing the evaluation. She was told that they will continue under normal process and that she should not email them anymore. On April 16, 2026 a department meeting was called, where the Treasurer announced that Chay Iv would assume the role as acting APA without the consultation of Nicole or the Pension Commission. Nicole was on vacation and was not present on that day. Even after the meeting, I still did not hear about my evaluation until June 17, 2026. On this day, I received an email from the Deputy Treasurer indicating that the Treasurer wanted to meet with me. In the meeting I was informed that there was a letter for me and that she would read it out loud, which she did and I have attached to this grievance for your review.

In my evaluation, Nicole gave me a 4.86% increase by the numerical value by the evaluation, however, the Treasurer gave a 2.7% change in the numerical value from Nicole. I am unsure that was determined as well as slashed nearly half from the original increase. There was no

justification for the decrease in the percentage dropping from the original value.

3. Grounds for Grievance

A. Contradictory and Pretextual Denial Reasons

The Treasurer denied my promotion under the claim that I lacked "managerial, supervisory, and operational" experience." This justification directly conflicts with four years of feedback, tasks completed, and the explicit endorsements of my direct supervisor. A formal review of the selection process for this role to determine how the current appointment is warranted and to determine if there is compliance with **Rule I., Section 1 of the City of Hartford Pension Commission's Personnel Rules, specifically the mandate for merit and fitness**, given the stark contrast between my documented qualifications and the acting individual's total lack of experience.

B. Disparate Treatment and Violation of Merit-Based Promotion Principles

Per Rule IV. The Pay Plan (Generally) of the promotion rules, all advancements and appointments *"shall be made according to merit, fitness and other appropriate factors."* The current handling of this position completely disregards this mandate:

- **Pretextual Denial:** The Treasurer claimed I lack "managerial, supervisory, and operational" experience. This is a false narrative that flies in the face of my four years of successfully executing these exact duties and my supervisor's explicit verification of my fitness.
- **Bypassing of Merit:** In direct violation of the "merit and fitness" clause, the role (along with a \$50,000 salary increase being paid by the pension fund) is being protected for an acting individual who possesses zero relevant experience or management skills, is barely present full-time, and has failed to complete core tasks. This was done without the consultation of the Plan Administrator or Pension Commission.
- **Failure of Fiduciary and Professional Standards:** Section 1 of Rule VII, Appointments, allows the Appointing Authority to request proof of qualifications to determine "relative fitness." By completely ignoring my documented record of "Exceeded Expectations" and instead fast-tracking an unproven individual, the Treasurer has weaponized her subjective judgment to bypass the strict meritocracy required by the Commission and the Municipal Code.

C. Pension Commission Policy Violations (Withheld Evaluations & Compensation)

Per our policy and procedures, employees are mandated to receive a performance evaluation every year.

- I have been denied my mandatory annual evaluations for the last three consecutive years.

- Consequently, I have not received a salary increase based on merit in nearly four years, despite my workload expanding to include the very tasks of the promotion I am being denied.
- Furthermore, the salary increase documentation previously submitted on my behalf was altered or disregarded by the Treasurer without justification.

D. Age, Race and Gender

I believe due to my race and gender, I have been discriminated against.

- The Treasurer, who favors Latinos and Puerto Ricans, and has verbally made it clear that she has issues with males, has discriminated against in both manners.
- Both appointees to the Audit and Pension Commission, she only wanted to put females as well as remove the males and also she stated in a public City Counsel meeting that we need to put a female on the Commission because there has never been representation of a female.
- Two commissioners that recently resigned all mentioned the fact of how difficult it is to work with her and even having the chair removed. In the Hartford Courant article posted on June 16, 2026, she stated “We have been taking the commission in a new direction with great success, and that may not always be easy for the members of the old boys’ club.”
- A fellow colleague in his position once told me that she mentioned to him “we need to do right by our people” in other words, Puerto Ricans, because he is Puerto Rican.
- Just to reiterate I was told that at my age I am making enough money and do well for myself so I should not be mad.

4. Remedy Requested

To resolve this matter equitably, cure the ongoing violations of Commission rules, and address the disparate treatment, I am requesting the following remedies:

1. Immediate Compliance with Rule XI: The immediate scheduling and completion of my missing annual performance evaluations for the past three years, to be signed off with an accurate appraisal reflecting my actual duties and supervisor’s evaluation and the level of success accomplished.
2. Retroactive Compensation Back-Pay: A full audit of my compensation, with a retroactive salary increase dating back to when my first missed annual review should have occurred under Rule XI.
3. An Independent HR Investigation into the Promotion Pretext: A formal review of the Treasurer's denial of my promotion. This investigation must evaluate the objective qualifications required for the Assistant Plan Administrator role versus my actual 4-year track record, against the 0-experience qualifications of the individual placed into the acting role.
4. An Independent Investigation by the City Attorney: A formal, unbiased

review conducted exclusively by the City Attorney's Office—completely bypassing In-House Counsel—to investigate the Treasurer's non-compliance with Rule XI, the violation of Section 1 merit-based promotion standards, and the issues of disparate treatment based on race and gender.

5. Lastly, I would like the commission to perform their fiduciary responsibility and review my last evaluation where the Plan Administrator has recommended my promotion to Assistant Plan Administrator.

I look forward to your prompt response to schedule a formal hearing or meeting to discuss this matter further. I reserve the right to bring a representative or counsel to any subsequent proceedings.

Sincerely,

Sabri Akter