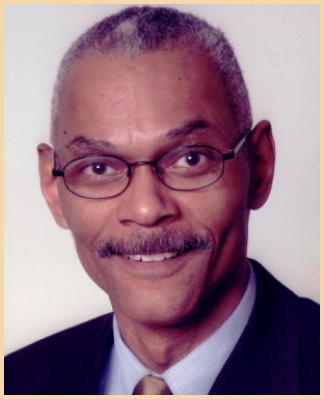
G. Michael Payton

Executive Director
Ohio Civil Rights Commission



Michael is the Executive Director for the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, the state law enforcement agency that administers the Ohio Civil Rights Act in the areas of employment, public accommodations, housing, credit and disabilities in higher education while conducting education and outreach. Michael oversees a statewide staff of 80 employees who investigate over 4,000 charges of discrimination annually.

Michael previously served as Chief Legal Counsel and Director of Operations for the Commission. In this capacity, he oversaw and directed civil rights investigations, administrative adjudications, special enforcement initiatives, Alternative Dispute Resolution and community outreach while providing legal advice to the Commission's staff.

Michael previously served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Ohio for 11 years. During this period, he prosecuted cases arising under the Ohio Civil Rights Act while serving as counsel to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. He then served as Assistant Chief in the Attorney General's Transportation Section and oversaw and conducted litigation as defense counsel for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in disputes involving civil rights, construction, contracts, employment, eminent domain and environmental matters. Michael also served as ODOT's Real Estate Administrator and in this capacity directed all statewide highway-related real estate acquisition and activities for ODOT.

Michael has served on the Traffic Stops Procedures Committee for the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and as an advisory committee member to the Ohio State Highway Patrol relating to biased-based policing. He is a member of the National Association of Human Rights Workers and an Honorary Member of Beta Gamma Sigma and Sigma Iota Epsilon Honor Societies at Wright State University's Roin College of Business.

Michael received a national award in April 2003 from EEOC Chairperson Cari Dominguez for innovative proactive prevention initiatives in education and outreach relating to employment discrimination. Michael is a 2007 recipient of the Ohio Conference NAACP's Civil Rights Vanguard Award; a 2008 recipient of the Fair Housing Advocates Association's Keeper of The Dream Award for fair housing advocacy; a 2010 recipient of the Toledo Chapter of the NAACP's President's Outstanding Civil Rights Award; a 2013 recipient of the West Virginia Human Rights Commission's Special Recognition Award in the cause for equality and human dignity; and, a 2013 recipient of The Ohio State University Alumni Association's Alumni in Government Distinguished Service Award.

Michael obtained his B.A. in Political Science from The Ohio State University and his Juris Doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center. He is a member of the Bar in the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Southern and Northern Ohio Districts of the United States District Court, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. He is an active speaker before various legal, professional and community groups.

Michael lives in Gahanna, Ohio with his wife and child. He enjoys reading and golf.