



HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES MADE EQUAL OF VIRGINIA, INC.

Ensuring equal access to housing for all people

For Immediate Release January 29, 2015

626 East Broad Street, Suite 400
Richmond, Virginia 23219

804.354.0641

Fax: 804.354.0690

VA Relay: 711

www.HOMEofVA.org
help@HOMEofVA.org

Contact:

Mike Burnette, Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME)
(804) 354-0641 x118, mburnette@HOMEofVA.org

HOME Shows Evidence of Housing Discrimination Against the LGBT Community

The Virginia Fair Housing Act needs added protections

Richmond – This year the Virginia legislature has the opportunity to expand the Virginia Fair Housing Act to protect sexual orientation and gender identity by passing HB 1454 (Simon, D-Falls Church). SB 917 (Wexton, D-Leesburg) already died on a 7-7 vote. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia already prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and Virginia could be the twenty-second.

Last year, when a similar bill was up for debate, some legislators suggested that there was no evidence of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Since the 2014 General Assembly, HOME has been conducting research into the prevalence of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the Richmond rental market. HOME's research clearly shows that discrimination is occurring. HOME's testing results show a **31%** rate of differential treatment by which same-sex couples were treated worse than different-sex couples. Housing discrimination such as this leads to longer housing searches, spending more money and acquiring less desirable housing. This makes obtaining and maintaining stable housing more expensive and more difficult for those who experience discrimination. Sexual orientation and gender identity are irrelevant to one's ability to be a paying, respectful tenant yet these characteristics are regularly being used to deny qualified home seekers access to housing. To read the findings, read this report, [Housing Discrimination Against Same Sex Couples in Virginia](#).

Delegate Marcus Simon said, "All Virginians should be treated equally in the housing market. This study raises serious doubts as to whether that is true for same-sex couples in Virginia. Fair Housing laws have proven effective in reducing housing discrimination based on race, gender, family status, religion and disability in the past. It is time for Virginia to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of classes protected under our Fair Housing statutes. That is why I have once again introduced a bill to do exactly that in HB 1454. I look forward to the day when all Virginians are judged on their merits when seeking a place to live and make their home."

Equality in Virginia is possible. We must not give up until it is a reality for every person in our state.

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME), founded in 1971, is a statewide fair housing non-profit. HOME's mission is to ensure equal access to housing for all people. HOME investigates housing discrimination and provides support for discrimination victims. You can learn more about HOME and all of its services at www.HOMEofVA.org.