



Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Sexual Harassment Fair Housing Complaint Settles in Chesterfield**

RICHMOND, VA – Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME), The Park at Ridgedale Independent Living, and TRG Management Company, LLP have jointly settled a fair housing complaint alleging that TRG Management staff at the Park at Ridgedale Independent Living community in Chesterfield County failed to act to remedy incidents of sexual harassment initiated by a tenant against another resident.

In September of 2015, a female resident\* of the Park at Ridgedale, contacted HOME alleging that a neighbor had sexually harassed her and other female residents. She alleges the neighbor made numerous advances against her, making sexually suggestive comments, cat calling her, and making physical approaches towards her in the common areas. She reported these incidents to both TRG Management staff and the Chesterfield County Police Department. HOME alleges that TRG Management never took corrective action with the offending tenant, and even refused to renew her lease due to her complaints.

HOME investigated the resident's claims, worked to counteract the discrimination, and filed a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

To settle HOME's and the resident's claims, TRG Management Company agreed to pay a total of \$37,500 in damages. They also agreed to adopt a sexual harassment policy and develop procedures for responding to tenant complaints of sexual harassment. They have also agreed to provide fair housing training to all employees who have direct contact with tenants, and to hold a community meeting at Park at Ridgedale to discuss fair housing and sexual harassment policies with residents.

HOME is pleased to resolve this matter. Heather Crislip, president and CEO of HOME, stated, "Your home should be your safe place. It is impossible to feel secure in your housing when facing sexual harassment, or any kind of harassment or discrimination, in the place you live. The national attention on sexual harassment highlights this vital moment to address an insidious problem. The Fair Housing Act protects you against sexual harassment where you live."

In September 2016, HUD issued a rule formalizing legal standards under the Fair Housing Act for sexual and other forms of harassment in housing. It stipulates the standard for *Hostile Environment Harassment*, which involves subjecting a person to unwelcome conduct that is sufficiently severe or pervasive enough that it interferes with or deprives a person the right to use and enjoy their housing opportunity. It also clarifies the responsibility of a housing provider to address illegal harassment occurring in their community.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for any person to harass or intimidate someone due to their race, color, religion, national origin, gender, familial status, or disability. According to the [National Fair Housing Alliance's 2017 Fair Housing Trends Report](#), there were only 640 reported harassment complaints nationwide in 2016. While this is significant increase from previous years, "harassment often goes unreported because it tends to victimize persons with elevated housing insecurity." These people are less likely to report harassment due to fear of losing their housing.

Any person who believes they or someone they know are being sexually harassed by a neighbor, maintenance worker, or landlord should contact HOME for free help at 804-354-0641 or visit [HOMEofVA.org](http://HOMEofVA.org). As a nonprofit fair housing agency, HOME helps victims with any form of housing discrimination.

\*Complainant does not wish to use her name and is not available for media interviews in order to protect her privacy. However, HOME staff is available to talk about this settlement.

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Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME), founded in 1971, is a statewide fair housing and HUD-approved housing counseling 501(c)(3) non-profit. HOME's mission is to ensure equal access to housing for all people. HOME's mission is to ensure equal access to housing for all people. HOME fulfills its mission to ensure equal access to housing for all people by addressing the still glaring individual instances of housing discrimination. Additionally, HOME works to tackle systemically divisive housing practices on a larger scale through fair housing enforcement and research, advocacy, and statewide policy work. HOME also takes direct action to aid first-time homebuyers and families with homes under the threat of foreclosure. At a time when unequal access to housing and credit contributes most to the United States' growing wealth gap, HOME's multi-faceted approach is a powerful catalyst toward furthering fair housing. You can learn more about HOME and all of its services at [www.HOMEofVA.org](http://www.HOMEofVA.org).

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