



Press Statement

For Immediate Release
May 26, 2015

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME) has settled a fair housing complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) against a retirement housing provider.

The complaint claimed that former policies on the use of motorized mobility devices at one of the provider's communities constitute illegal housing discrimination against people with physical disabilities. In order to resolve the complaint, the retirement community agreed to: (1) adopt a policy that complies with the Fair Housing Act; (2) advertise the new policy to all residents and applicants; (3) receive fair housing training; (4) refund additional security deposits and additional insurance premiums required of persons utilizing motorized mobility devices; and (5) reimburse HOME for the costs of investigating the case.

HOME was represented in this matter by the Washington, D.C.-based civil rights firm of Relman, Dane & Colfax, PLLC.

Pursuant to the now-discarded policy, residents using motorized mobility devices were required to pay an additional security deposit and obtain liability insurance. Some residents who use motorized wheelchairs or scooters also alleged that they were discouraged from using the community's van for transportation, which the community denied. The Fair Housing Act permits a housing provider to ensure that a resident can safely operate powered mobility devices, but prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's disability, the creation of architectural barriers, and the application of different terms and conditions to persons with disabilities.

In 2013, fair housing agencies like HOME received a total of 9,088 complaints on the basis of disability, comprising 48% of all complaints nationally. The increase in such complaints is generally attributed to greater awareness of disability rights, a growing senior population, and service members returning from combat overseas. HOME engages in disability rights advocacy in support of greater access and community integration for people with disabilities.

"Just like the national statistics, HOME, too, receives more disability complaints than all other complaints." HOME's Director of Fair Housing, Helen Hardiman, said. "Our work in this case demonstrates HOME's commitment to educating consumers about their rights and housing providers about their responsibilities under fair housing laws."

Any persons who believe that they were treated differently because of their mobility devices or other disability-related needs, or any individuals who believe that they have been victims of housing discrimination anywhere in Virginia should contact HOME at 804-354-0641.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on seven “protected classes”: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status (families with children under age 18). Fair housing laws in Virginia offer an additional protection for individuals aged 55 years or older.