



Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia

626 E. Broad St., Suite 400, Richmond, VA 23219

804-354-0641, VA Relay 711, HOMEofVA.org

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CONTACT:

Mike Burnette, Direct Line: 804-237-7549 | Mike@HOMEofVA.org

VC Solutions LLC and The Coleman Group LLC Pay \$67K To Settle Alleged Violations of Fair Housing Protections for Families with Children

Richmond, VA - Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia (HOME) has reached a global settlement between HOME of VA, their client Tracy Ferrell, Mechanicsville-based property management company VC Solutions LLC, and property owner The Coleman Group LLC. In 2019, HOME and Ms. Ferrell filed a fair housing complaint with the Virginia Fair Housing Office alleging that VC Solutions and the Coleman Group LLC violated federal and state fair housing and civil rights laws by not renting to families with children.

Tracy Ferrell, a single mom of four kids and a housing choice voucher holder, was working with a housing counselor through HOME's Move to Opportunity Program that helps voucher holders find housing. Ms. Ferrell found a three-bedroom home for her family in her ideal location. Ms. Ferrell toured the home and quickly filled out an application. Shortly after completing the application, Ms. Ferrell received a phone call from the property managers who asked if she would agree to an inspection of her current property. They told Ms. Ferrell that since past families with children have not maintained properties well, they want to perform an inspection of her current property to see how it is maintained. During the phone call, the property manager placed the property owner on the call who raised concerns about renting to families with children because she did not want her property to be "torn up." Upon learning about Ms. Ferrell's experience, Ms. Ferrell's housing counselor connected her with HOME's fair housing department to educate her about her fair housing rights.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, HOME's executive director, said, "It is a violation of the Fair Housing Act to deny someone housing simply because they have children. We receive too many phone calls about housing providers not willing to rent to families with children. Standing up for your rights is not an easy process, and we commend Ms. Ferrell for speaking out to this injustice on behalf of her family and other families who may have experienced something similar."

In 1988, the Fair Housing Act was amended to add familial status protections meaning that the Act covers families who have children under the age of 18 or those expecting children or in the process of adopting.

This settlement has opened homes to families with children in the Richmond region that were not previously available. Per this settlement, Respondents are required to develop a non-discriminatory policy and distribute the policy to staff, agents, and current tenants; undergo a period of compliance by the Virginia Fair Housing Office (VFHO); and attend a VFHO approved fair housing training. Additionally, VC Solutions and The Coleman

Group will collectively have to pay \$67,240.58 to Ms. Ferrell and HOME. Of HOME's portion, HOME has made a \$5,000 grant to Housing Families First, a nonprofit organization that helps families with children find housing in the Richmond region. HOME will also use its portion of the settlement to educate the public about fair housing rights of families with children, support HOME's Mobility Program efforts to assist renters with Housing Choice Voucher holders find housing, and increase the fair housing department's ability to respond to fair housing allegations.

Fitzpatrick said, "HOME is committed to holding housing providers accountable when they engage in housing discrimination. If you are private owner using a property management company thoroughly vet that company; because, if they engage in discrimination, you will also be held accountable. If you are a renter who has been told you cannot live somewhere because you have children, call HOME at 804-354-0641."

Ms. Ferrell commented in the end that, "HOME has been there from day one helping me use my voucher before it expired. I didn't even know I had a discrimination case until my counselor spotted the immediate red flag, and they helped me get through it. I was hurt that this company thought I would damage the place just because I had kids. I just needed a roof over our heads, and time was running out."

About HOME:

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia (HOME) is a civil rights fair housing organization with a mission to ensure equal access to housing for all people. Founded in 1971, we exist to address housing-related systemic inequities that perpetuate segregation, concentrations of poverty, and wealth inequality. HOME enacts its mission through fair housing enforcement and advocacy, housing research and policy, and HUD-approved housing counseling and education direct services. At a time when unequal access to housing and credit contributes most to the United States' growing wealth gap, HOME's multifaceted approach is a powerful catalyst toward furthering fair housing. You can learn more about HOME and all its services at www.HOMEofVA.org.

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