



Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc.

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March 21, 2024

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Tri-Hope Life Ministries files federal fair housing lawsuit against Powhatan County for rejection of recovery home

Richmond, VA –Tri-Hope Life Ministries (Tri-Hope) filed a [federal lawsuit](#) today alleging that the Powhatan County Board of Supervisors discriminated on the basis of disability against Tri-Hope and its clients by requiring and then refusing to approve a permit to allow individuals in recovery from addiction to reside together in a home leased by Tri-Hope for this purpose. Tri-Hope is represented by attorneys from Spotts Fain, P.C. and Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME).

Powhatan County, Virginia strictly enforces an ordinance requiring members of a protected class under fair housing laws—those with the disability of drug or alcohol addiction—to seek the county’s permission to live together in a recovery home. Powhatan County has never approved any such recovery home, effectively depriving anyone in the protected class from living in a recovery home anywhere in the County. This ordinance directly violates the Federal and Virginia fair housing laws by “imposing restrictions on housing because of alleged public safety concerns that are based on stereotypes about the residents”¹ membership in protected class of people, in this case people with disabilities. The lawsuit seeks to enjoin Powhatan County from continuing to violate the legal rights of Tri-Hope and its residents, so that they may live in a recovery home in the community of their choosing free of unlawful discrimination.

Joel Hughes, director of Tri-Hope, said of the lawsuit, “We were thrilled to find such a perfect home in Powhatan to locate one of our recovery homes. The sense of peace of the surroundings is great for our residents as they rebuild their lives. We are deeply saddened that Powhatan County has decided based on discriminatory stereotypes to deny our residents the chance to recover near their community, and has not given us the opportunity to be the good neighbors that we know we are.”

Brenda Castañeda of HOME said, “Powhatan County’s ordinance itself and its decision to deny the permit fly directly in the face of the Fair Housing Act and years of precedent establishing that localities cannot make zoning and permitting decisions based on stereotypes and prejudice about people with disabilities. We hope that this lawsuit leads Powhatan County to cease violating fair housing laws, and that localities around Virginia that may have similar ordinances take notice and do the same.”

¹ Joint Statement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice, “State and Local Land Use Laws and Practices and the Application of the Fair Housing Act,” Nov. 10, 2016, p. 3

About Tri-Hope: Tri-Hope Life Ministries is a faith-based life coaching ministry local to the Richmond area that works with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals dealing with addiction and reconnects with them from the inside out. As a part of its ministry and services, Tri-Hope maintains two recovery homes focused on providing continued connection and support to those in recovery.

About HOME:

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME of VA), founded in 1971, is a statewide fair housing and HUD-approved housing counseling 501(c)(3) non-profit. 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, families with homes under the threat of foreclosure, families facing eviction, and helps families with housing choice vouchers move to neighborhoods of opportunity. 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 of its services at www.HOMEofVA.org

For information about Spotts Fain please visit <http://www.spottsfain.com>.