

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

April is Fair Housing Month and marks the 48th Anniversary of the national Fair Housing Act

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The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is pleased to recognize the 48th Anniversary of the passage of the Kentucky Fair Housing Law, which passed on March 15, 1968, and became part of the 1966 Kentucky Civil Rights Act. The commission also recognizes the 48th anniversary of the United States Fair Housing Act, which passed on April 11, 1968, and became part of the 1964 U.S. Civil Rights Act.

April is recognized as the Annual Fair Housing Month, both, nationally, and in Kentucky. Kentucky became the first southern state to pass a state-level housing anti-discrimination law. The Kentucky Human Rights Commission is proud that Kentucky Governor Matthew G. Bevin on March 30 officially proclaimed April 2016 as Fair Housing Month in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

In the proclamation, Governor Bevin wrote: "...fifty-six years after its founding [in 1960], the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights continues to address housing discrimination in our Commonwealth, supporting programs that educate the public about the right to equal and fair housing opportunities and planning partnerships with state and federal organizations to help assure fair housing in Kentucky..."

Through the Kentucky Civil Rights Act, the Kentucky Human Rights Commission is mandated as the state authority that enforces the laws prohibiting discrimination, including housing discrimination. The commission takes complaints from people throughout the state and beyond who believe they may be victims of housing and other discrimination that allegedly occurred within the state. The commission neutrally investigates the complaints, and with the authority of a court of law, rules upon discrimination complaints. Throughout the process, the commission seeks to resolve complaints through settlements and conciliations to offer relief to complainants.

"Last year, the commission addressed 47 housing discrimination complaints, and in the last 10 years from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2015, the commission has addressed over 500 housing complaints," said John J. Johnson, executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. "On a national level, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development receives thousands of complaints each year," he said.

"Housing discrimination exists and is destructive," Johnson said. "A lack of understanding and lack of willingness to respect others' equal rights and equal opportunity remains a blight that works against the success of society, and the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights and many others work to change that every day," he said.

A growing area of housing discrimination complaints in the state and on a national level concerns the protected class of disability. Another is the protected class basis of familial (family) status, which protects families with children in the household under age 18 years old and protects women who are pregnant, Johnson said.

The national and state fair housing laws make it illegal to discriminate against people regarding housing regardless of people's race, color, religion, national origin, disability, and familial status. The laws provide equal opportunity to people when buying, selling, renting, financing or insuring housing. People have the right to buy or rent where they choose a home, condominium, apartment, trailer or lot.

Everyone must obey the law. Those who must comply include property owners along with their managers and employees, real estate brokers, sales agents, operators, builders and developers, advertisers and advertising media like newspapers and property listing publications, mortgage lenders, insurers, and banks or other financial institutions.

Among the practices prohibited by law, it is illegal to: refuse to sell, rent, lease or exchange real estate because of discrimination; deny a reasonable accommodation to a renter with a disability; coerce, intimidate, threaten or interfere with a person's enjoyment of his or her home because of discrimination; communicate that a property is unavailable when it is available; communicate that the racial makeup of a neighborhood may change or cause property values to go down or make other similar false and misleading statements; publish advertising that states a preference of one person over another based on discrimination; discriminate in the grant, rates, terms, conditions or services of financial assistance in real estate transactions; discriminate in the making or purchase of loans; discriminate in terms, conditions or privileges of housing-related insurance; deny access or restrict membership of multiple-listing services or real estate organizations for discriminatory reasons.

The commission holds trainings throughout the year in different parts of the state, to communities and groups, and to businesses such as real estate companies, newspapers, and also to people or companies who have been alleged in a complaint to have discriminated against parties in the area of housing. The training educates people about their civil rights and about the obligation to obey the law and how to comply and ensure housing discrimination does not occur.

As part of recognition of the annual Fair Housing Month of April 2016, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is pleased to offer in collaboration with the Lexington Fair Housing Council, two free fair housing trainings during April.

The first will be at 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time), on April 22, at the Clark County Cooperative Extension Office, 1400 Fortune Drive, in Winchester, Ky., 40391.

The training is offered to housing providers, leasing agents, social service providers, and all others interested, including people who would like to learn about their legal rights to the housing of their choice. In addition to covering federal, state, and local fair housing law, focus will be given to reasonable accommodations and modifications for qualified individuals with a disability. Officials will also describe the discrimination complaint process of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. To register for this

event, please email to Juan Pena at Juan.pena@ky.gov, or call him at the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights at 502.566.9955.

Training will be provided from 1 to 3 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time) at the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Office, 28 Parkway Drive, in Somerset, Ky., 42503.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights enforces laws against discrimination. In addition to housing, discrimination is illegal in the areas of employment, public accommodations, and credit transactions. For help with discrimination, contact the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights at 1.800.292.5566