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TO: Property Owners

FROM: Gurbir S. Grewal, Attorney General, State of New Jersey
Craig Sashihara, Director, NJ Division on Civil Rights

DATE: August 2018

SUBJECT: Housing Discrimination Laws

The New Jersey Real Estate Commission requires every licensed broker or salesperson with whom you list your property to give you a copy of this notice. The purpose is to help you comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (the “LAD”) and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in the sale or rental of real property.

In New Jersey, it is illegal to discriminate against a prospective or current buyer or tenant because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, civil union status, affectional or sexual orientation, familial status, pregnancy or breastfeeding, actual or perceived physical or mental disability, ancestry, nationality, domestic partner status, source of lawful income used for mortgage or rental payments, or liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States. It is also illegal to place any advertisement or make any statements or utterances that express, directly or indirectly, any limitations to offer housing or real estate based on any of those characteristics.

State and federal fair housing laws apply to a wide range of activities such as advertising, selling, renting, leasing, subleasing, assigning, and showing property (including open land). Here are some issues that come up frequently in enforcing the LAD:

- Discrimination based on “source of lawful income used for mortgage or rental payments,” means, for example, that a landlord cannot reject a prospective tenant because he or she intends to rely on a Section 8 rental voucher, FEMA voucher issued to Superstorm Sandy victims, or other types of rent subsidies.
- A “No Pets” rule cannot be enforced to prevent a person with a disability from using a service or guide dog. A landlord may not charge a tenant with a disability an extra fee for keeping a service or guide dog.

- Discrimination based on “familial status” prohibits discrimination against families with a child or children under 18 years old, and includes pregnant women.
- Landlords must permit a tenant with a disability—at that tenant’s own expense—to make reasonable modifications to the premises if such modifications are needed to give the tenant full enjoyment of the premises.

Penalties. If you commit a discriminatory housing practice that violates the LAD, you may be subject to penalties not exceeding \$10,000 for a first violation, not exceeding \$25,000 for a second violation within five years of the first offense, and not exceeding \$50,000 for two or more violations within seven years.

Other remedies. Victims of discrimination may recover economic damages related to the discrimination (such as having to pay higher rent for another unit) as well as damages for emotional distress, pain and humiliation. In more egregious cases, a victim may also recover punitive damages.

Brokers. The broker or salesperson with whom you list your property must transmit to you every written offer he/she receives on your property. Brokers and salespersons are licensed by the New Jersey Real Estate Commission and their activities are subject to the general real estate laws of the State and the Commission’s own rules and regulations. The broker or salesperson must refuse your listing if you indicate an intent to discriminate based on any of the protected classes.

Exemptions. The sale or rental of property (including open land) whether for business or residential purposes, is covered by the LAD. In most cases, the following sales or rentals are exempt from the LAD¹:

- Renting one apartment in a two-family dwelling if the owner lives in the other apartment.
- Renting a room or rooms in a one-family dwelling if the owner lives in the same dwelling.
- A religious organization can give preference to persons of the same religion when selling or renting real property.
- In certain types of housing designated for older persons, it is not unlawful to discriminate based on familial status.

¹ Discrimination in connection with some of the transactions covered by these exemptions may nevertheless be prohibited under the *Federal Civil Rights Act of 1866*, 42 U.S.C. 1981, 1982.

For more information about the LAD and Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, or if you have other questions about discrimination in the sale or rental of real property, including how to report a complaint, please review our website www.NJCivilRights.gov or call our Housing Hotline at (866) 405-3050. Please contact us if you would like the Division on Civil Rights to provide training on the subject of housing discrimination. Thank you.



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