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INFORMATION SHEET

OUR MISSION

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) is a private nonprofit corporation with the mission of increasing access to housing by eliminating illegal housing discrimination. We conduct activities such as enforcement, education, and outreach to further fair housing in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

“FAIR HOUSING” IS ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS

Fair Housing laws are federal, state, and local laws that prohibit housing discrimination. It is illegal to treat a person differently in a housing transaction *because* the person is a member of a “protected class.” (Please refer to our separate spreadsheet for a complete and current listing of protected classes.)

Fair housing laws apply to housing-related activities involving rentals, sales, lending, insurance, land use regulations, zoning, and development to name a few. Types of illegal actions include discrimination through denial of housing, refusal to negotiate, providing false information, eviction, applying different rules or standards, advertisements or statements, harassment, intimidation, provision of services, or steering. To ensure equal opportunity to people with disabilities, fair housing law provides that people with disabilities have the right to make their housing physically accessible and to request reasonable changes in rules or policies.

Fair housing laws are different than Landlord-Tenant laws, Fair Credit Reporting laws, and other regulations that may be applied to housing activities. Additionally, sometimes what appears to be illegal discrimination or differential treatment may not actually be illegal. For example, if a landlord decided they did not want to rent to smokers, this would not be considered illegal discrimination, because smokers are not currently a protected class under any fair housing laws. However, if repeated violations of other housing laws appear to be targeted to certain individuals because of their membership in a protected group (such as people who are members of one race or people who all speak languages other than English) this may be a violation of the fair housing laws.

FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL OF OREGON PROGRAMS:

Enforcement

FHCO staff receives complaints of housing discrimination over a toll free hotline that serves Oregon and Clark County, Washington. FHCO analyzes potential discrimination complaints and assists individuals in pursuing their rights. FHCO has staff that speak English and Spanish. FHCO also has a TTY system and translation assistance for over 100 languages.

When possible, FHCO conducts testing or other investigations that may provide independent evidence of a fair housing violation. "Testing" is a proven method for investigating fair housing complaints. Trained testers are closely matched except for the protected class status in question and are sent to the rental or sales agent specified in the allegation. Differences in treatment can provide enough evidence to successfully resolve a fair housing complaint through administrative systems or the courts.

FHCO staff refer individuals whose fair housing rights have been violated to the appropriate enforcement resource. We refer complainants to attorneys, the Fair Housing Enforcement Hub at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Civil Rights Division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). FHCO provides technical assistance and serves as a resource to a pool of attorneys who take fair housing referrals.

Outreach and Education

FHCO provides fair housing materials to housing advocates, social service agencies, landlords, property management companies, real estate agents and public officials throughout Oregon and Clark County, Washington. FHCO publishes a quarterly newsletter, "*The Promise of Opportunity*", which reports on recent fair housing cases and regional fair housing news. FHCO and supportive funders sponsor an annual Fair Housing Poster Contest open to Oregon students grades 1-8, and hosts events in April to celebrate National Fair Housing Month.

FHCO offers training on all aspects of fair housing law. Each year, FHCO conducts several low cost or no-cost trainings open to the public throughout Oregon. FHCO also has a fee-for-service training program available to property management companies, landlord and real estate associations, and housing authorities.

For additional information about the Fair Housing Council of Oregon, contact us by phone, in person, or via email or fax. Or, visit our website. You will find all of our contact information on the opposite side of this sheet. If you need special accommodations or translation/interpretation assistance to access our services, we are happy to make special arrangements.

WE DO NOT GIVE LEGAL ADVICE

Most of our staff members are not attorneys, so we do not give legal advice. However, we can give you general information, technical assistance, and guidance that will further help you to understand fair housing laws or to access additional legal or professional resources.