



Department of Justice

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Justice Department Files Fair Housing Lawsuit Against Landlords in Scranton, Pennsylvania

WASHINGTON –

The Justice Department yesterday filed suit against the owners and managers of The Mill, an apartment complex in Scranton, Pa., for having and enforcing policies that discriminate against families with children in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, alleges that the defendants, Gerard Joyce, Katie Joyce, Daniel Joyce, Normandy Holdings LLC, Lofts at the Mill LP, and Lofts GP LLC, had a policy of not allowing families with children. The complaint also alleges that, even after being informed that their policy was discriminatory, defendants continued to distribute flyers and publish advertisements containing a "21 yrs. or older" restriction for The Mill. In response to a request by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County conducted fair-housing testing at the Mill. Fair housing testing is the practice of having individuals who pose as renters for the purpose of gathering information about possible discriminatory practices in the rental or apartments. During the tests, the defendants provided the testers with materials containing the "21yrs. or older" restriction.

"Families should not have to face discrimination as they look for a home. The Fair Housing Act ensures that families with children have the right to live in communities of their choice." said Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

This lawsuit arose as the result of a complaint that was filed by Kim Kendrick, the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, on behalf of the Secretary of HUD. Under the Fair Housing Act, the Secretary of HUD may investigate housing practices to determine whether a complaint should be filed and, on his own initiative, file a complaint. After an investigation of the complaint, HUD issued a charge of discrimination, and the defendants elected to have the case heard in federal court.

"Under the Fair Housing Act, familial status should have no effect on an individual's access to housing," said Kim Kendrick, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal. "We will continue to proactively, through Secretary-initiated investigations, root out violations of the Fair Housing Act and ensure non-discriminatory treatment for all."

The suit seeks a court order prohibiting future discrimination by the defendants, requiring the defendants to pay monetary damages to persons aggrieved by the defendants' discriminatory policies and to pay a civil penalty. The suit also alleges that the defendants' conduct constituted a pattern or practice of discrimination, or the denial of rights to a group of persons that raises an issue of general public importance, and seeks monetary damages for any other persons harmed by the defendants' actions.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 249 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, 49 of which have alleged discrimination based on familial status. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

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