

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RENTAL AGENT EXPOSES ILLEGAL HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

On her first day at a new job, rental agent Chelsae Lakin contacted the Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan to report the owners of Fontaine Gardens Apartments in Saginaw, Michigan.

According to the complaint, Ms. Lakin stated that the owner, Dr. Sakti Pramanik, told her that only one person or a couple could rent a one bedroom apartment, thus making those units off limits to a parent and child. Ms. Lakin called the FHC because she did not want to participate in discrimination.

The Fair Housing Center took her complaint and opened an investigation in January 2015. FHC testing supported Ms. Lakin's claim that her employers, Sakti and Papri Pramanik, instructed her to discriminate against families with a child. Testers were told, "apartments for kids of a certain age are in a different building" and "you cannot rent a one bedroom, because children are not allowed."

Ms. Lakin found another job in May 2015. Though the new job was only part-time and paid less she, gave her two-week notice, and broke her two-year employment contract. She also never took advantage of the rent-free apartment at Fontaine Gardens due to the Pramaniks' discriminatory actions.

According to the lawsuit filed on October 14, 2015, between January and May 2015, Ms. Lakin learned that the "Defendants also stated and held a discriminatory preference for non-disabled tenants over similarly situated disabled tenants [as well as] stated and held a discriminatory racial preference for white tenants over black tenants." The lawsuit also states that Ms. Lakin repeatedly informed Dr. and Mrs. Pramanik that it was illegal to discriminate in the rental of housing on the basis of a protected status - that their practices were against fair housing law - but they would not change their policies.

Chelsae Lakin accepted an undisclosed amount to settle her federal fair housing case in October 3, 2016. The suit was filed by FHC Cooperating Attorneys Stephen M. Dane and Jia Cobb from Relman, Dane, & Colfax, with assistance from local Cooperating Attorney Thomas Daniels of Pear, Sperling, Eggan, & Daniels. The case was assigned to the Honorable Thomas L. Ludington, a Federal Judge in the Eastern District of Michigan.

Court: Federal

Settlement: Non-disclosed

Attached: Picture of Chelsae Lakin

The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan (formerly Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan), founded in 1992, actively protects the civil rights of those who are discriminated against in the rental, sale, or financing of housing through investigation, education, advocacy, and legal action. The FHC takes an average of 150 complaints each year from its eight-county service area – Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw counties.

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