A Michigan woman is suing after she says a landlord asked her to provide something extra in exchange for lower rent. She's claiming the owners of the property, a husband and wife, violated federal and state laws.

A single woman in her 30's just looking for a place to live -- Robert Howard, Attorney at Bos & Glazier acting as a cooperating attorney for the Fair Housing Center, says Sarah Yoder found the house on Craigslist.

"It looked like just what she needed—one bedroom. It was in a price range she could afford. She liked the neighborhood. It was convenient," said Howard.

Yoder loved the home but the price was a little higher than what she wanted to pay.

"She asked if the price was negotiable and he offered to reduce it in return for her giving a little strip tease," said Howard.

Yoder showed us text messages she said were between her and the homeowner Ryan McDonell. The messages show comments on Yoder's dress and then offering a deal for a striptease. One text even stated "You don't have to get naked. Just something cute maybe and let me watch u."

"She was humiliated, embarrassed there was no flirtatious response on her part. She was just immediately like that is not who I am," said Howard.

Later that day, she said the same property was listed for cheaper and it was listed under a different name- a man named Jason. That's when she took a friend with her to check it out.
10/28/2019

Woman files lawsuit against Lansing landlord for unwanted advances

https://www.wilx.com/content/news/Woman-files-lawsuit-after-landlord-makes--563578881.html

But when she arrived it was McDonell.

"When she rejected his advances and ran back to her car, Mr. McDonell screamed at her you goddamn Indian expletive," said Howard.

Yoder is a member of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa Indians. Howard says Yoder filed a complaint with the Fair Housing Center the day after it happened in August of 2018. They're suing claiming McDonnell violated federal housing law and a state civil rights law.

“The Fair Housing Act is there to protect people from exactly this sort of treatment and the wonderful thing about technology today is that we have evidence of it," said Howard. "We have his statement from his phone number with his name on it making these statements. It's not he said she said."

The case is a civil suit so there won't be any criminal consequences from it. Yoder has found another place to live in Ingham County. She says she hopes this case prevents others from going through similar situations.

News 10 attempted to reach Ryan McDonell at his business, home, through email and calls. McDonnell also owns several Haven Smoke Shops in Lansing. We have not heard back.

McDonell's wife is named in the lawsuit because she is joint owner of the property.

Copyright 2019 WILX. All rights reserved.

Get the latest updates from wlix.com delivered to your browser

SUBSCRIBE TO PUSH NOTIFICATIONS