

Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A copy of the filed complaint is available upon request.

Civil Rights Demands Change at MSU Sorority

Alpha Omicron Pi (AOII) has agreed, in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, to create written policies with regard to assistance animals. The sorority's policies were the subject of a fair housing complaint by Michigan State University Alum Kayla Hicks.

According to the complaint taken by the Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan in the fall of 2017, Ms. Hicks needed an assistance animal, a two-pound Netherland Dwarf Rabbit named Sebastian.

Ms. Hicks was in communication with the national offices of the sorority during the summer of 2017 and she provided the sorority with documentation that she had a disability and needed her Emotional Support Animal.

Ms. Hicks then filed a complaint with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and moved out of the sorority. Ms. Hicks was later referred by the Fair Housing Center to an attorney, who filed a complaint on behalf of Ms. Hicks in U.S. Federal Court on November 14, 2018. The case was assigned to the Honorable Robert J. Jonker. The Court referred this case to a mediator and the matter was eventually dismissed by mutual stipulation of the parties.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights charge was also resolved. According to the settlement agreement with the MDCR, "fraternity and sorority houses...are not excluded from the [Michigan Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act] provisions prohibiting discrimination based on disability or any other protected classifications."

Under the MDCR agreement, the sorority agreed to accommodate members with a disability at all AOII sorority houses in Michigan.

The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid 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 160 complaints each year from its eight-county service area – Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw.

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