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# MSU sorority settles lawsuit over banished therapy rabbit

**Omar Abdel-Baqi, Detroit Free Press** Published 4:48 p.m. ET Nov. 20, 2019 | Updated 7:12 p.m. ET Nov. 20, 2019

A Michigan State University sorority has settled a federal lawsuit, agreeing to amend its no-pet policy after it barred a member's emotional support rabbit from living in the sorority's house.



MSU alumna Kayla Hicks provided medical documentation to Alpha Omicron Pi in summer 2017, stating she suffers from anxiety and that her doctor suggests the use of an emotional support animal, a 2-pound Netherland dwarf rabbit named Sebastian, according to the lawsuit.

She had already moved in for her senior year when she got a letter from the national sorority saying no support animals are allowed, according to the Fair Housing Center of Southeast and Mid Michigan.

Alpha Omicron Pi later threatened eviction if she didn't remove her rabbit from the house, the lawsuit states. Hicks filed a complaint with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and filed a lawsuit with an attorney she was referred to by the Fair Housing Center of Southeast and Mid Michigan.

**Hicks with her rabbit, Sebastian.** (Photo: The Fair Housing Center of Southeast and Mid Michigan)

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The lawsuit alleged Alpha Omicron Pi violated the Fair Housing Amendments Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act.

The case ended up in federal court in November 2018. The judge working on the case assigned it to a mediator, and it was subsequently resolved.

The sorority amended its no-pet policy and agreed to accommodate its members who have a disability at all of its Michigan houses in a settlement with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

"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," according to the settlement between the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and Alpha Omicron Pi.

A resolution made directly between Hicks and Alpha Omicron Pi was agreed upon, the terms of which are confidential.

Contact Omar Abdel-Baqui: 313-222-2514 or [oabdel-baqui@freepress.com](mailto:oabdel-baqui@freepress.com). Follow him on Twitter @omarabdelb

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