

Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A copy of the complaint can be [found here](#).

Apartment Complex Sued for “No Felony” Policy

On February 26, 2020, The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan filed a race discrimination lawsuit against Erie Investments owner of Red Lion Apartments, in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The site is the former Lakeshore Apartments. The suit alleges that by having a “no felony” policy the owner knew or should have known that it would have a disparate impact on African-American tenants and potential tenants. The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, alleges violations of the Fair Housing Act.

The suit alleges that Defendants’ “elevation of criminal history as an absolute bar to residency without consideration of other eligibility criteria for tenancy is also counter to other normal business practices in the apartment industry. In the normal course of business, consideration of income, prior rental history, credit, and other factors occurs simultaneously during the application process, and after an application has been submitted and reviewed.”

According to an [MLive article](#) from April 3, 2019:

“Erie Investments has purchased and renovated multiple troubled apartment complexes in Ypsilanti Township. Now, the company is making its effort to rehab a mismanaged, section 8 complex in the city of Ypsilanti and market it to Eastern Michigan University Business School students”

The student body of EMU is only 17% African-American compared to the City of Ypsilanti which is over 30% Black.

Mike Radzik, director of community standards for Ypsilanti Township, told MLive that Erie Investments “typically.. will implement strict rental standards.”

“A landlord’s wish to be ‘strict’ towards prospective tenants does not give them the right to violate federal law,” said Pamela A. Kisch Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center. “2016 HUD Guidelines make it clear that property agents must look at each person on an individual basis. How long ago did the felony occur? How old was the person at the time? What has this person accomplished with his or her life since that time?”

The Fair Housing Center has taken numerous complaints of discrimination based on criminal background. Some include bans on individuals who have arrest records.

The Fair Housing Center is represented by FHC Cooperating Attorney William F. Piper of Piper Law in Portage, 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 180 complaints each year from its eight-county service area – Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw.

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