

Department of Justice

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Justice Department Files Fair Housing Lawsuit Against Owner and Managers of Illinois Mobile Home Park for Discriminating Against African-Americans and Families with Children

The Justice Department filed a lawsuit today against the owner and those responsible for the management of a 126-space mobile home park in Effingham, Ill., for violating the Fair Housing Act (FHA) by discriminating against African-Americans and families with children.

“People should not be denied the housing of their choice because of their race or because they have children,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jocelyn Samuels for the Civil Rights Division. “The Justice Department will continue its vigorous enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, which outlaws such discrimination.

“America’s strength is in its diversity,” said U.S. Attorney Stephen R. Wigginton for the Southern District of Illinois. “The Southern District of Illinois recognizes that our nation, our district and our communities depend upon each and every person being afforded the basic rights that this country gives them. As such, my office is proud to defend everyone’s right to live where they want, free from discrimination.”

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, charges that owner Lorraine Wallschlaeger, manager Barbara Crubaugh and David Crubaugh, another employee with management responsibilities, engaged in a pattern or practice of violating the FHA by imposing requirements on African-Americans interested in living at Four Seasons Estates Mobile Home Park that they did not impose on white prospective tenants, such as completing a written application and having their mobile homes inspected before being accepted into the park. The suit also charges that the defendants threatened to evict a white resident and his niece from the park if her African-American boyfriend did not leave, and refused to register the African-American boyfriend as a resident.

In addition, the lawsuit alleges that the defendants did not permit families with children to live on one of the four rows at the mobile home park.

The lawsuit arose after the residents who were subjected to the discriminatory conduct contacted HOPE Fair Housing Center, an organization in Illinois that advocates for equal opportunity in housing, who in turn contacted the Justice Department. Some of the evidence leading to the filing of today's lawsuit came from statements made by Four Seasons officials to testers, individuals who pose as renters to gather information about possible discriminatory practices. The testing evidence in this case was developed by the department's Fair Housing Testing Program.

The lawsuit seeks a court order prohibiting future discrimination by the defendants, monetary damages for those harmed by the defendants' actions and a civil penalty. Any individuals who have information relevant to this case are urged to contact the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section of the Civil Rights Division at 1-800-896-7743, mailbox #94.

The federal FHA prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.usdoj.gov/crt. Individuals who believe that they have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov or contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

The complaint is an allegation of unlawful conduct. The allegations must still be proven in federal court.