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***New Lawsuit Challenges Suburban Property Manager for Using Blanket Ban to Violate Civil Rights***

**WHEATON, IL** – A property management company in suburban Chicagoland has been discriminating against African American rental applicants by enforcing a myriad of blanket bans on individuals with an arrest or conviction history, according to a [lawsuit](#) filed Thursday, February 17, 2022 in federal court.

Plaintiffs HOPE Fair Housing Center and Robert Johnson filed the lawsuit after Finch & Barry Properties, L.L.C. expressed to Mr. Johnson that something had appeared on his criminal background check when he was attempting to renew his lease in March 2021, for a new unit at the same property. Johnson had already been living at the Villages on Maple apartment complex in Lisle, IL without any prior issues. Instead of inviting Mr. Johnson to continue his tenancy which dates back to 2014, management informed him that he had 30 days to vacate his home.

“I was pretty much out on the streets,” Johnson said.

The item on Johnson’s background check was a 2015 charge for possession of a gun. Johnson was working as a security guard at the time, and the case against him was dismissed in May 2016. He attempted to explain to the property manager that the charge had been dismissed and never resulted in a conviction, but to no avail Mr. Johnson was told he had to leave. Management told him that if he did not move out his rent would double, bringing it to an amount management knew he could not afford.

“People of color get the short end of the stick most of the time,” said Johnson.

According to guidance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), blanket ban policies are a violation of civil rights. Housing providers must evaluate the perceived threat of tenants with an arrest or conviction records on a case-by-case basis.

“Blanket bans on individuals with records disproportionately impact people of color,” said Kelly Lambert, the attorney representing Johnson. “Mr. Johnson's case is a stark example of illegal blanket rental ban policies that have a discriminatory impact on people of color.”

Despite an otherwise spotless tenancy, Mr. Johnson was wrongfully rejected by the property management company, resulting in emotional and financial distress. Mr. Johnson and HOPE Fair Housing Center are represented by the legal team of Soule, Bradtke and Lambert.

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*HOPE Fair Housing Center works to create greater housing opportunities for all. We want to ensure everyone has the chance to live in the community/home/apartment of their choice free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familiar status, or any other characteristics protected under state or local laws. HOPE accomplishes this through education, outreach, enforcement, training, and advocacy.*