



Housing Research & Advocacy Center
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Read the report: <http://www.thehousingcenter.org/StateofFairHousing2007.htm>

Housing Discrimination Complaints Increase in Region: Most Complaints Filed Based on Disability and Race

Complaints of housing discrimination rose in each of the last five years in northeast Ohio, reaching their highest level in 17 years in 2006, according to a new report issued by the Housing Research & Advocacy Center in Cleveland. From 2001 to 2006, the number of complaints filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) more than doubled, from 98 to 214. Of the complaints filed in this 5-year period, 38.0% involved discrimination based on disability, 34.1% involved race discrimination, and 13.3% alleged discrimination based on familial status.

Jeffrey D. Dillman, Executive Director of the Housing Center, stated, “While the increase in the number of complaints filed is disturbing, we know that this is just the tip of the iceberg, and the actual number of instances of discrimination is much higher.” The Housing Center estimates that there are annually at least 33,690 instances of housing discrimination in the region against African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the rental and sales markets, meaning the vast majority of cases are never reported to a government agency. This increase in complaints is consistent with national data from HUD which reported in March 2007 that it had received more complaints in 2006 than in any previous year.

The Housing Center’s report, entitled “The State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio: April 2007,” analyzes housing discrimination and segregation in a six-county region made up of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties. Among the report’s other findings:

- the number of housing discrimination complaints filed increased by 61% in the last five years (2002-2006) compared to the period 1997-2001, from an average of 89.0 per year to 143.6 per year;
- *upper* income African Americans were denied more loans than *low* income whites, and for those individuals who obtained loans, upper income African Americans were more than twice as likely to obtain high-cost home purchase loans as low income whites (58.9% compared to 24.6%);
- 49 localities in the region have fair housing ordinances, including 34 in Cuyahoga County, 3 in Ashtabula County, 3 in Lake County, 7 in Lorain County, and 2 in Medina County. There are no local fair housing ordinances in Geauga County.

Dillman continued, “This report documents the continuing extent of housing discrimination in the region and shows how far our region has to go to end this practice. It is time for governments at all levels to make a strong stand against housing discrimination and to commit additional resources to ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to choose their housing free from discrimination.”

Federal law prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of housing, and in the mortgage lending and homeowners insurance markets, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and handicap. In addition, Ohio law prohibits discrimination based on ancestry.

The report recommends that local governments enact stronger fair housing laws, implement comprehensive education efforts, vigorously enforce fair housing laws through systemic testing for discrimination as a means of addressing housing discrimination in the region, and increase investigation of mortgage lenders.

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is a nonprofit fair housing organization whose mission is to eliminate housing discrimination and assure choice in Northeast Ohio by providing those at risk with effective information, intervention and advocacy.

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