



Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Announcing: Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California Negotiates Settlement of Disability Discrimination Complaint on Behalf of Client

San Rafael, CA – Just before Fair Housing Month was celebrated in April, a settlement agreement was executed in a gender and disability discrimination complaint brought by Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) and one of its clients against Bret Andrews, a Bay Area landlord. The complaint, filed in February 2021 with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), alleged that Mr. Andrews discriminated against her in violation of federal, state, and local fair housing laws.

The client, a Mill Valley tenant of approximately ten years, alleged that Bret Andrews sexually harassed her, retaliated against her for refusing his sexual advances, and failed to accommodate her disability on multiple occasions. She alleged that the sexual harassment was not an isolated incident, but a series of incidents over the course of years during her tenancy at Mr. Andrews' property, and that following her rejection of his sexual advances, he began retaliating against her by communicating with her in a hostile and unprofessional manner and frustrating her efforts to get repairs.

The client contacted FHANC in May 2020, seeking advice about her fair housing rights, sharing information about her disability and need for reasonable accommodations. FHANC requested reasonable accommodations on her behalf, which included a request that Mr. Andrews cease from engaging in any hostile, retaliatory, or unprofessional behavior toward her; that he contact her only via email, except in an emergency; give her reasonable notice for entry into her unit; refrain from sharing personal information about her with others; refrain from entering her unit for any reason other than an emergency during the Covid-19 pandemic; and, in the event of entry, take precautions to protect her health and safety, including social distancing and wearing a mask.

The complaint against Mr. Andrews asserted that while he agreed to grant some of her reasonable accommodation requests, he failed to grant her request to cease hostile communications and continued to act in a hostile manner toward both her and FHANC's attorney during the negotiation process, and that he violated her fair housing rights by deliberately frustrating and delaying the reasonable accommodation process by requesting extraneous and unnecessary documentation, refusing to meaningfully engage in the interactive process as required by fair housing law, and imposing unnecessary and unduly burdensome conditions before considering her requests. FHANC also filed a complaint, asserting that the agency's resources had been diverted and its mission frustrated by Mr. Andrews' discriminatory actions.

A local non-profit helping communities eliminate housing discrimination

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MEMBER, NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

Mediation resulted in a settlement agreement compensating FHANC's client \$60,000 and FHANC \$30,000. Additionally, Mr. Andrews and all his employees and agents who have contact with residents or prospective residents at any California property he owns will attend comprehensive fair housing training with a non-profit fair housing organization. In addition, he agreed not to engage in unlawful housing discrimination in the future. The agreement was signed by all parties in March 2022.

"It was extremely unfortunate that our client had to suffer through such a difficult experience and ultimately felt forced to move out, incurring moving and other expenses, even after our intervention and our reasonable accommodation request on her behalf," said Caroline Peattie, Executive Director of FHANC. "Your home should be a place where you feel safe. We hope that the fair housing training that Mr. Andrews undergoes will help him better understand his boundaries as a landlord as well as his obligation when a person with a disability requests a reasonable accommodation."

FHANC's client was represented by FHANC Housing Counselor John Froggatt, and Supervising Attorney Julia Howard-Gibbon represented FHANC.

If you feel you may have experienced housing discrimination, contact FHANC's office to complete an interview. Contact FHANC at fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org or 415-457-5025 x101 or fill out an online intake at <https://www.fairhousingnorcal.org/>.

Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure equal housing opportunity and to educate our communities on the value of diversity in our neighborhoods. FHANC serves several Bay Area counties and provides free counseling, enforcement, mediation, and legal or administrative referrals to persons experiencing housing discrimination. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California also offers foreclosure prevention counseling, pre-purchase education, seminars to help housing providers fully understand fair housing law, and education programs for tenants and the community at large. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California is a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency. Please call Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California at (415) 457-5025 or TDD: (800) 735-2922 for more information. Note: This material is based on work supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under FHIP PEI Grant FPEI190035. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of HUD.