



Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

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October 27, 2021

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 – On October 4, 2021, a settlement agreement was executed in a disability discrimination complaint brought by Lucia Gillis, who was represented by **Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC)**, against the **Suisun City Housing Authority**. The complaint, filed in April 2021 with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) and mediated through DFEH's Dispute Resolution Division, alleged that the respondents discriminated against Ms. Gillis' minor and disabled son in violation of federal, state, and local fair housing laws.

Ms. Gillis is a single mother of two minor sons. One of her children lives with intellectual and mental health disabilities and requires a full-time caregiver to manage symptoms. Her family had previously been granted a voucher that accommodated her family's needs. The discriminatory conduct occurred when her family moved to the City of Suisun, where the Suisun City Housing Authority (the Housing Authority) refused to issue a new voucher that would accommodate Ms. Gillis' disabled son or his live-in attendant.

The complaint alleged that the Housing Authority discriminated against Ms. Gillis' disabled son, by interfering with his fair housing rights and for failing to accommodate his disability. The Housing Authority stated that existing policies prevented Ms. Gillis' family from receiving the accommodation, despite her having provided medical documentation of their disability-related housing needs.

Mediations resulted in a settlement agreement in which the Housing Authority paid Ms. Gillis \$75,000. Additionally, the Housing Authority will modify policies and practices to come into compliance with the Fair Housing Act, including:

- permitting separate bedrooms for live-in attendants
- not imposing fees for reasonable accommodations
- accepting requests for accommodations in any verbal or written form
- clarifying the scope of medical documentation that may be sought when considering a reasonable accommodation request
- undergoing fair housing training for Housing Authority staff and Suisun City Manager

A local non-profit helping communities eliminate housing discrimination



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The agreement was unanimously approved by the Suisun City Council on September 21, 2021.

“It was extremely unfortunate that Ms. Gillis lost her voucher because the Suisun Housing Authority did not grant her reasonable accommodation request,” said Caroline Peattie, Executive Director of FHANC.

“Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the settlement and the willingness of the Suisun City Council to enter into a settlement agreement to do right by Ms. Gillis. We think the fair housing training that staff will undergo will help the housing authority better understand their obligation when a person with a disability requests a reasonable accommodation.”

Ms. Gillis was represented by FHANC Staff Attorney Ursula Lindsey. “I was upset after experiencing discrimination,” said Ms. Gillis. “When the Housing Authority ignored my family's accommodation requests, I was afraid we would be homeless. I turned to prayer, which gave me strength. FHANC helped me fight for my rights. I'm so thankful that Ursula Lindsey was there to advise me and advocate for our family.”

If you feel you may have been discriminated against, contact FHANC’s office to complete an interview. Contact FHANC at fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org or 415-457-5025 x101.

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.