



Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

1314 Lincoln Ave., Ste. A, San Rafael, CA 94901 ▼ (415) 457-5025 ▼ TDD: (800) 735-2922

www.fairhousingnorcal.org ▼ fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Caroline Peattie, Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California
(415) 483-7552, peattie@fairhousingnorcal.org

Announcing: Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California Releases Report of Investigation into Discriminatory Housing Policies Related to National Origin and Familial Status

San Rafael, CA – This week Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) released a report of their findings resulting from an investigation of housing discrimination against Latinx parents.

The investigation of sixty (60) landlords operating rental properties in Marin, Solano, and Sonoma counties was carried out from January through April 2023, with twenty (20) properties investigated in each county. Trained pairs of testers – one Latinx and one white non-Latinx – posed as potential renters with children and called to inquire about the availability of listed rental properties. FHANC compared the experience of the testers to determine whether disparities existed in the way each tester was treated and whether they were offered or told about different housing opportunities, policies, terms, and/or amenities.

Discriminating against households with children or expressing a preference for households without children is considered familial status discrimination, which is prohibited by fair housing laws. Similarly, discrimination against Latinx renters is considered national origin discrimination, which is also prohibited. At over 58% of the properties investigated, FHANC found evidence of familial status discrimination (39%), national origin discrimination (over 30%), or both (15%).

Many of the tests revealing discrimination showed that housing providers refused outright to rent to families with children or had policies that disproportionately affected families, such as overly restrictive occupancy rules. Additionally, some housing providers who discouraged the Latinx tester from renting because she had children made no such discouraging comments to the white non-Latinx tester or were willing to make exceptions to occupancy rules for the white tester, revealing evidence of discrimination based on both familial status and national origin.

Tests conducted in Marin County revealed the highest incidence of discrimination, with 67% of tests revealing at least some evidence of discrimination. Fifty-three percent of the tests conducted in Marin County revealed evidence of familial status discrimination. While Marin tests revealed the most discrimination overall, tests in Sonoma County revealed the greatest evidence of national origin discrimination. Housing providers in Solano County were the least discriminatory, with 25% of tests revealing evidence of familial status discrimination and 23.5% revealing evidence of national origin discrimination.

A local non-profit helping communities eliminate housing discrimination

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MEMBER, NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

Tests at 14 large properties comprising 2,646 units – “large” being defined as those with more than 50 units – showed significantly less evidence of discrimination (just over 21%) than the 44 tests conducted at small and medium sized properties (72% and 67%, respectively). The small and medium sized properties comprised 276 units combined. This disparity was most pronounced in tests revealing evidence of familial status discrimination: while 56.7% of tests at small properties and 46.2% of tests at medium sized properties revealed evidence of familial status discrimination, not a single test conducted at a large property revealed evidence of familial status discrimination.

“Though federal and state fair housing laws have prohibited housing discrimination on the basis of national origin and familial status for decades, the complaints we receive and results of investigations such as this one show that Latinx families continue to experience discrimination as a barrier to housing choice,” said Caroline Peattie, Executive Director of FHANC. “Discrimination against Latinx renters is compounded when they have children. It’s clear that more enforcement actions are needed, as well as increased education and outreach to property owners and managers, particularly those of smaller properties and in areas where instances of discrimination were the highest. When housing providers are willing to openly state their discriminatory housing policies, even in writing, that suggests the likelihood that at least some are unaware of their legal obligations. This really points to the need for increased education and outreach.”

The report makes a number of recommendations, including disseminating the report to officials in the tri-county area as well as the general public, media, and advocacy groups as an important educational tool; monitoring the sites where there was an indication of differential treatment and taking possible enforcement action; training private and public housing providers and working with them to ensure they understand the law; conducting additional audits; and spreading the word to potential targets of discrimination.

“It’s really difficult to find any kind of affordable housing in the Bay Area now,” said Peattie. “This report points out how much more difficult it is for single Latinx mothers. We need to redouble our efforts to make sure housing providers not only understand the law but comply with it, and start removing barriers for families with children and particularly Latinx families.”

If you feel you may have experienced housing discrimination, contact FHANC’s office to complete an interview. Fill out an online intake at <https://www.fairhousingnorcal.org/> or 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 FPEI220095. 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.