



JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Justice Department Files Lawsuit Against Philadelphia Condo Association for Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities

The Justice Department announced today that it has filed a lawsuit alleging that a Philadelphia condo association has violated the Fair Housing Act by discriminating against persons with disabilities who need assistance animals, including emotional support and service animals.

The lawsuit arose from a complaint filed by a condo owner with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, alleges that the Dorchester Owners Association (DOA) discriminated against persons with disabilities needing service animals and emotional support animals at The Dorchester on Rittenhouse Square by denying their requests for reasonable accommodations to its “no pets” policy. The complaint further alleges that the DOA, located at 226 West Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA, 19103, has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination since 2009 by maintaining policies that, among other things, exclude all assistance animals—including service animals—from the Dorchester’s common areas, impose a blanket ban on visitors’ assistance animals that have not been first qualified by the DOA from coming onto the Dorchester property, and require that residents granted reasonable accommodations for assistance animals obtain a \$1 million insurance policy naming the DOA as an additional insured.

“People with disabilities who need assistance animals to live their lives should not have to surmount unreasonable hurdles to keep those animals in their homes,” said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband of the Civil Rights Division. “Discriminating against people with disabilities is unacceptable and illegal, and the Justice Department will continue vigorously to enforce the Fair Housing Act to combat this type of discrimination and to obtain relief for its victims.”

Today’s lawsuit seeks monetary damages to compensate victims, civil penalties, and a court order barring future discrimination. The complaint contains allegations of unlawful conduct, which must be proven in federal court.

Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Justice Department at 1-800-896-7743, email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777, or through its website at https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp.

Attachment(s):

[Download dorchester_complaint_3-12-2020_signed.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

Civil Rights

Component(s):

[Civil Rights Division](#)

[Civil Rights - Disability Rights Section](#)

[Civil Rights - Housing and Civil Enforcement Section](#)

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