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Know Your Fair Housing Rights as the Rental Season Nears *Illinois Department of Human Rights Warns of Housing Discrimination During Rental Searches*

CHICAGO – As summer approaches and rental leases begin to expire, May is regarded as the unofficial start of renting and moving season in Chicago. The Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) urges renters to know their fair housing rights and to report any signs of discrimination to IDHR or local agencies.

“An apartment search is a difficult experience, but it becomes an immeasurable challenge when landlord policies are not applied equally to all rental applicants,” said IDHR Director Rocco Claps. “Any applicant who is worried about the potential of discrimination or landlord who is wondering if their policies reflect the law should contact our office.”

While many current tenants face discrimination, it can go unnoticed during the search process. Examples of discrimination during a rental search can include lying about the availability of a property or unit, steering clients toward specific communities based on race or ethnicity, changing the terms or conditions of a transaction, or setting policies that discriminate against specific protected classes.

“While there have been significant improvements since the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, housing discrimination has become more subtle than it has been in the past,” said Director Claps. “Unfair treatment in housing occurs every day and many are hesitant to report it.”

IDHR suggests applicants watch for the following signs and examples of potential housing discrimination during a rental search:

- Overly intrusive questions relating to citizenship status, national origin, disability, familial or marital status, or religion.
- A rental unit suddenly becoming unavailable after an initial inquiry: “Sorry, the apartment was just rented.”
- A landlord not responding to emails or voicemails regarding a publicly listed rental unit.
- Real estate agents steering clients towards particular neighborhoods and away from others on the basis of race or ethnicity: “I think we should show you listing in areas where you might feel more comfortable because of the kind of people that live there.”
- Restrictive policies or comments, such as “Your English isn’t good enough,” “We don’t rent to families,” or “We don’t allow service animals.”
- Landlords who don’t apply the same policy to all rental applicants or who suddenly change a policy or terms during a transaction: “Since you have children, your security deposit will be two months’ rent instead of one.”

If suspicious of housing discrimination, IDHR suggests keeping a record of any meetings and phone calls, including names, addresses, receipts, and notes on what was said. For more information, please contact IDHR's Fair Housing Division at (312)-814-6229 or visit <http://www2.illinois.gov/dhr/FilingCharge/Pages/Housing.aspx>.

The Illinois Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination with respect to employment, financial credit, public accommodations and real estate transactions because of a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, marital status, disability, sexual orientation (including gender identity), arrest record in employment, familial status in housing (families with children under the age of 18) and more. Further information is available at www.illinois.gov/dhr.

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