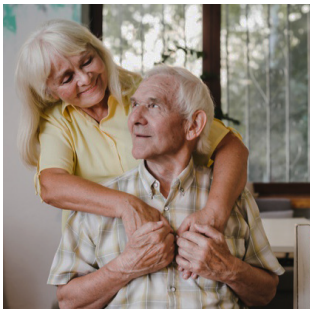


CITY OF BUFFALO



MAYOR SEAN M. RYAN

FAIR HOUSING LAW A GUIDE TO KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS



IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONTACT:

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1. INTENT

It is the goal of the City of Buffalo to continue efforts to revitalize and strengthen its neighborhoods. The city finds it necessary to protect the rights of its citizens to equal access to housing, which will help prevent the decline in property values yet ensure housing choices for all residents.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Advertising** – Printing, circulating, placing or publishing or causing to be placed or published any written statement, including electronic media, with respect to the availability for sale or rent of housing or the listing of housing with any person, business or entity which maintains a referral list of available housing.
- **Complainant** – Means the person who files a complaint with the Fair Housing Officer.
- **Disability** –
 - A. A physical, mental or medical impairment resulting from anatomical, physiological, genetic or neurological conditions which prevents the exercise of a normal bodily function, which substantially limits one or more major life activities; or is demonstrable by medically accepted clinical or laboratory diagnostic techniques; or
 - B. A record of having such an impairment; or a condition regarded by others as such an impairment; or an association with a person with such an impairment.
- **Dwelling** – Any building, structure, or portion thereof which is occupied as, or designed or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land which is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location thereon of any such building, structure, or portion thereof, located within the City of Buffalo.
- **Familial Status** – Any person who is pregnant or has a child or is in the process of obtaining legal custody of an individual who has not attained the age of 18 years; or one or more individuals who have not attained the age of 18 years domiciled with a parent or another person having legal custody of such individual or the designee thereof.

- **Gender Identity and Expression** – Include a person's actual or perceived gender-related identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, expression, or other gender-related characteristic regardless of whether the gender identity, self-image, appearance, expression, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth, including, but not limited to, the status of being transgender.
- **Housing** – Any building, structure or portion thereof located within the City of Buffalo which is occupied, intended or designed for occupancy as the home, residence, or sleeping place of one or more persons sharing living quarters.
- **Housing Accommodation** – A change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service necessary for a person with a disability to have equal access to and enjoyment of housing, including public and common areas.
- **Landlord** – An owner, lessor, sublessor, owner's or lessor's assignee, or managing agent, or other person having the right to sell, rent or lease housing constructed, or to be constructed, or any agent or employee thereof.
- **Major Life Activities** — For purposes of this section, include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. Major life activities also include the operation of a bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.
- **Marital Status** – Single, married, divorced, separated or widowed.
- **Military Status** – A person's participation in the United States military or the military of a state.
- **National Origin** – Ancestry, birthplace, culture, or language.
- **Person** – Includes one or more individuals, corporations, partnerships, associations, labor organizations, legal representatives, mutual companies, joint-stock

companies,
trusts, unincorporated organizations, fiduciaries, receivers,
and trustees.

- **Rent** – To lease, sub-lease, to let or to otherwise grant for a consideration the right to occupy a premises not owned by the occupant.
- **Sexual Orientation** – An individual's actual or perceived romantic, physical or sexual attraction to other persons, or lack thereof, on the basis of gender. A continuum of sexual orientation exists and includes, but is not limited to, heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, and pansexuality.
- **Source of Income** – The term "lawful source of income" shall include, but not be limited to, child support, alimony, foster care subsidies, income derived from social security, or any form of federal, state, or local public assistance or housing assistance, including, but not limited to, Section 8 vouchers, or any other form of housing assistance or credit whether or not such income or credit is paid or attributed directly to a landlord, and any other forms of lawful income.
- **Therapy Dog or Cat** – Any dog or cat that is trained to aid the emotional and physical health of patients in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes, personal residences, and other settings and is actually used for such purpose, or any dog or cat during the period such dog or cat is being trained or bred for such purpose.

3. THE RIGHTS OF LANDLORDS

This article does not prohibit a landlord from refusing to rent housing to a person if one or more of the following conditions are met:

- A. The person's source of income is unstable, or insufficient to pay the rent, or the source of said income is from an unlawful source; or
- B. The tenant has been unable to make timely rental payments in all or part of the preceding 18 months; or
- C. The person has been the source of past complaints from

neighbors in all or part of the preceding 18 months, except where those complaints can be reasonably attributed to harassment or discriminatory intent; or

- D. The person intends to occupy the housing with a larger number of persons than can be accommodated under occupancy standards established by law; or
- E. For any other reason not prohibited by the laws of the United States, the State of New York or the discriminatory practices set forth in this article, provided that such refusal is based upon legally permitted criteria and those criteria are applied equally to all prospective tenants.

4. PROMOTION OF FAIR HOUSING GOALS

Within 120 days of the effective date of this article, all landlords owning rental units within the City of Buffalo, and all real estate offices within the City of Buffalo selling residential housing, shall be required to use the equal opportunity logotype or a statement of equal opportunity housing on applications and marketing materials and to display in rental or real estate offices a public notice of equal opportunity in housing.

5. NOTIFICATION TO MULTIPLE DWELLING OWNERS

Every owner required to obtain a certificate of occupancy as detailed in Buffalo Code § 129-6 shall also complete a certification before said certificate of occupancy may be issued that the owner is fully aware of the Fair Housing Ordinance for the City of Buffalo and has received a copy of said ordinance. The Department of Permit and Inspection Services shall ensure that such owners receive a copy of the Fair Housing Ordinance.

6. UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

It shall be unlawful for any person or entity engaged in the sale or rental of housing to do the following:

- A. Refuse to sell, rent, lease, make unavailable for inspection, sale or rental, or otherwise to deny or withhold from any person or persons housing because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability or reliance upon a therapy dog or cat, familial status, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military status or source of income.
- B. Discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions or privileges of sale, rental or lease of any housing or in the furnishing of facilities or services in connection therewith because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability or reliance upon a therapy dog or cat, familial status, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military status or source of income.
- C. To print or circulate or cause to be printed or circulated any statement, advertisement or publication, or to use any form of promotion for the purchase, rental or lease of housing or to make any record or inquiry in connection with the prospective purchase, rental or lease of housing which indicates any preference, limitation, or specification or discrimination as to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability or reliance upon a therapy dog or cat, familial status, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military status or source of income, or an intention to make any such preference; and/or which fails to include an equal housing opportunity logotype, statement, or slogan as a means of educating the home-seeking public that the property is available to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. For all print or space advertisements, the Equal Housing Opportunity logo shall be of a size delineated by Table 1 attached as Appendix A of this subsection. For all other advertisements, the Equal Housing Opportunity logo shall be of a size at least equal to the largest of the other logotypes and should be bold and clearly visible. An example of equal housing opportunity logotype, statement, and slogan is attached as part of Appendix A of this subsection.

APPENDIX A of ARTICLE IV:

Table 1:

Size of advertisement	Size of logotype in inches (IN)
½ of an 8.5-inch x 11-inch standard letter page or larger	2x2
1/8 page up to ½ page	1x1
4 column inches to 1/8 page	½ x ½

Illustrations of Logotype, Statement, and Slogan. Equal Housing Opportunity Logotype:



EQUAL HOUSING

Equal Housing Opportunity Statement:

We are pledged to the letter and spirit of U.S. policy for the achievement of equal housing opportunity throughout the Nation. We encourage and support an affirmative advertising and marketing program in which there are no barriers to obtaining housing because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.

Equal Housing Opportunity Slogan:

"Equal Housing Opportunity."

- D. To induce or attempt to induce any person to sell or rent any housing by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of persons of a particular race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability or reliance upon a therapy dog or cat, familial status, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military status or source of income.
- E. Refusal to permit, at the expense of a person with disabilities, reasonable modifications of existing premises, if such modifications may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the housing [accommodation], and a refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services which may be necessary to afford a person with disabilities equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.
- F. To deny access or otherwise to discriminate against a blind person, a hearing impaired person or a person with another disability because he or she is accompanied by a dog that has been trained to work or perform specific tasks for the benefit of such person by a professional guide dog, hearing dog or service dog training center or professional guide dog, hearing dog or service dog trainer, or to discriminate against such professional guide dog, hearing dog or service dog trainer engaged in such training of a dog for use by a person with a disability, whether or not accompanied by the person for whom the dog is being trained. This section shall apply regardless of breed, or any other type of therapy dog or cat.
- G. To incite, compel or coerce the doing of any acts forbidden by this article, or to retaliate or discriminate against any person or entity because that person or entity has filed a complaint or testified or assisted in any proceeding commenced under this article.
- H. For any bank, savings or loan association, insurance company

or other entity whose business consists in whole or in part of the making of loans and arranging of financing for housing or secured by real property or the issuance of property insurance to discriminate in the issuance or terms and conditions of a loan or insurance policy because of age, color, creed, disability, familial status, gender identity and expression, marital status, military status, national origin, race, sex, sexual orientation, source of income or use of therapy dog or cat.

7. EXEMPTIONS

The provisions of this article shall apply to all housing within the City of Buffalo as well as land zoned for residential uses except the following:

- A. The rental of housing on a parcel that contains housing for not more than three households living independently, if the owner resides in one of the dwelling units, or the rental of housing on a parcel that contains more than one residential dwelling in which no dwelling is for more than three households or less living independently, if the owner resides in one of the dwelling units;
- B. The restriction of the rental of rooms in housing to persons of the same sex;
- C. The rental of a room or rooms in housing designed in such a way that the occupants would be required to share part of their living quarters with another occupant or occupants not of their own choice; and
- D. Restriction of the sale, rental or lease of housing exclusively to persons 55 years of age or older and their spouses with respect to age and familial status only.

8. ENFORCEMENT

- A. The Mayor of the City of Buffalo shall designate a Fair Housing Officer to receive, investigate and/or refer complaints under this article to a qualified fair housing enforcement agency certified to investigate and handle fair housing complaints.
- B. Any person or organization, whether or not an aggrieved

party, may file with the Fair Housing Officer a complaint alleging violation of this article within one year from the date of the occurrence. Such complaint shall be in writing, and shall state the name and address of the person alleged to have committed the unlawful discriminatory practice complained of and which shall set forth the particulars thereof and contain such other information and in such form as required by the Fair Housing Officer.

- C. The Fair Housing Officer shall serve the accused party with notice of the alleged violation of this article within 60 days of the date of the receipt of a complaint. Such notice shall include a copy of the complaint and contain a statement that the accused party is required to submit a written answer in response to such complaint with the Fair Housing Officer no later than 20 days after the service of such notice. Such notice shall also contain a statement warning the accused party that failure to answer the complaint in the manner and time stated in the notice may result in a default finding of reasonable cause being entered against such party. A notice of violation shall be served by mailing a copy of the complaint to the accused party's actual place of business, dwelling place or usual place of abode, "last known residence", or the address listed on the certificate of occupancy by certified mail, return receipt requested. The date of the mailing of the Fair Housing Officer's notification shall be endorsed thereon. The Fair Housing Officer shall, thereafter, make a prompt investigation in connection with the complaint sufficient to determine whether there is reasonable cause to establish discriminatory conduct
- D. A person who was not named in a complaint, but who during the course of the investigation has been identified as a person alleged to have violated this article, may be joined as an additional or substituted party upon written notice as set forth herein to such a person, at any time, from the Fair Housing Officer.
- E. If upon the filing of any complaint with the Fair Housing Officer, any person takes any action to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person who, in the exercise or

enjoyment of, or on account of having exercised or enjoyed, or on account of having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of their rights, reported a violation of any right granted or protected by this article, such person shall be charged with retaliation under section 154-17.

F. During the period beginning with the service of such complaint and ending upon the filing of an action by the Corporation Counsel in accordance with section 154-20 herein or a dismissal by the Fair Housing Officer, the Fair Housing Officer shall, if in their judgment a conciliation agreement would satisfactorily resolve the complaint, engage in conciliation with respect to such complaint:

(1) A conciliation agreement arising out of such conciliation shall be a binding agreement between the parties and shall be subject to approval by the Fair Housing Officer and approval as to form by the Corporation Counsel. A conciliation agreement shall include provisions requiring the accused party to refrain from unlawful discriminatory practices, settlement of the alleged violations and/or charges, and such other consideration(s) as agreed upon by the parties.

(2) Whenever the Fair Housing Officer has reasonable cause to believe that a party has breached a conciliation agreement, the Fair Housing Officer shall refer the matter to the Corporation Counsel with a recommendation that a civil action be filed under section 154-20 for the enforcement of such agreement.

G. Within 180 days of the date of receipt of the complaint, the Fair Housing Officer shall conclude the investigation and prepare a final investigative Report.

(1) If, based upon the evidence, the Fair Housing Officer determines that reasonable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred, the Fair Housing Officer shall refer the matter as detailed in section 154-20 herein.

a. Such referral shall consist of a statement of the facts upon which the Fair Housing Officer has found reasonable

cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred and shall include the final investigative report.

(2) If, based upon the evidence, the Fair Housing Officer determines that reasonable cause does not exist to support a finding that discriminatory housing practice has occurred, the Fair Housing Officer shall dismiss the complaint and provide written notice of such findings to the accused party, the complainant, and the Corporation Counsel.

8. PENALTIES

A. Upon certification by the Fair Housing Officer that there has been an affirmative finding of reasonable cause of discriminatory practice, the Fair Housing Officer may:

(1) Request the City's Corporation Counsel to file an action against the accused party, in a court of competent jurisdiction, seeking the imposition of the following penalties:

(a) A fine not exceeding two-thousand and five hundred dollars (\$2,500) for the first instance of discrimination in violation of this article; plus, a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars (\$5,000), for each finding of a subsequent act of discrimination in violation of this article. Each act of discrimination shall be considered a separate offense; and/or

(b) Subsequent violation. Any person found to have previously violated this article shall be subject to a fine not exceeding five-thousand dollars (\$5,000) for the first instance of discrimination in violation of this article; plus, a fine not exceeding ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each subsequent finding of discrimination in violation of this article. Each act of discrimination shall be considered a separate offense; and/or

(c) Revocation or suspension of any license or permit issued by the City of Buffalo necessary to the operation of the housing in question, and any other

equitable relief necessary to effect the purposes of this article; and/or

(d) All costs, expenses and disbursements incurred by the City of Buffalo in effecting compliance with this article; and/or

(e) Such other relief directed by a court of appropriate jurisdiction; and/

(2) Request a qualified fair housing enforcement agency to commence a civil action or proceeding for injunctive relief, damages, and other appropriate relief in law or equity against a person who violates the fair housing laws.

- B. The Corporation Counsel may seek a contempt order from a court of appropriate jurisdiction, if necessary, to enforce a conciliation agreement or penalties imposed under this article.
- C. The Corporation Counsel may commence a civil action or proceeding in the name of the City of Buffalo for injunctive relief, damages, and other appropriate relief in law or equity against a person who violates this article. In any such action or proceeding, the court, in its discretion, may allow for the party commencing such action or proceeding, if such party prevails, a reasonable attorney's fee as part of the costs.
- D. Nothing in this provision shall obviate, prevent, or otherwise alter, a complainant's right to commence a separate and distinct civil action or proceeding for injunctive relief, damages, and other appropriate relief in law or equity against a person who violates this article. No agreement entered into as part of conciliation between the City of Buffalo and the person who violates this article shall be binding upon the complainant.

9. Annual Report

The Fair Housing Officer shall prepare an annual report detailing the work performed, including a statistical analysis of the caseload, a summary of dispositions of complaints filed and/or referred to housing agencies, and recommendations regarding fair housing practices. This report shall be submitted to the Mayor and filed with the City Clerk no later than March 1 of each year. Copies shall also be sent to the Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights, the Attorney General of the State of New York, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Housing and

10. Other Remedies

Nothing in this article shall limit or abridge the right of a complainant to pursue any other remedies that may be available under the laws of the State of New York, the United States or any other applicable jurisdiction.

11. Construction of Provisions

Nothing in this article shall be construed to invalidate or limit any law of the State of New York, the United States or any other jurisdiction that grants, guarantees or protects the same rights that are granted, guaranteed or protected by this article.

12. Severability

If any part of this article shall, for any reason, be adjudged by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not impair or invalidate the remainder of this article.



Revised August 2025

