

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZE APRIL AS FAIR HOUSING MONTH

This morning, the Franklin County Commissioners were joined by representatives from the Columbus Urban League as they recognized April as Fair Housing Month. This April marks the 46th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title VIII of which is commonly known as the Fair Housing Act. This historic legislation provided for equal housing opportunities regardless of race, creed, or national origin, and made it a federal crime to interfere with anyone availing themselves of those opportunities.

Subsequent revisions to the Fair Housing Act have expanded it to protect against discrimination based on gender, disabilities, and on whether a family has children. In 2012, new U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations set forth that no one searching for a home can be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity when trying to access HUD-funded programs or federally-insured mortgages.

“Fair housing, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation, is not a goal but a right that must be ardently protected,” said Commission President Marilyn Brown, who organized a local strategy meeting with the City of Columbus, the Columbus Urban League and Stonewall Columbus to begin a concentrated effort on outreach to the area’s gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community in 2012. “All of our residents, immigrant, GLBT or otherwise, ought to be able to live wherever they choose. In Franklin County, our housing programs are open, not just to some or most, but to all.”

“Our nation was founded upon principles of freedom and equality,” Commissioner Paula Brooks said. “Regardless of race, creed, disabilities, family makeup, gender identity or sexual orientation, all should be able to live freely wherever they desire, in Franklin County and throughout our country.”

“We must remain vigilant in assuring equal opportunity and fair housing for all in our community,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “I’m proud of our excellent working relationship with the Columbus Urban League and others that defend our residents’ and families’ rights to live where they desire.”

Each year, Franklin County invests in the Columbus Urban League to investigate illegal housing discrimination complaints and educate landlords and tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities. This year, Franklin County expects to allocate \$80,000 in HUD funding to the Columbus Urban League.

“Fair Housing is important because all Franklin County residents deserve and have the right to housing equity, freedom of choice and the opportunity to live in diverse and stable neighborhoods with jobs, transportation, health care and quality schools,” said Toni Cunningham, Vice President & Chief of Program Performance and Innovation at the Columbus Urban League. “The Columbus Urban League is committed to ensuring that individuals’ rights are protected as they seek housing for themselves and their families.”

If anyone feels that they are being discriminated against by a landlord, or housing provider, they should call 614-469-5737.

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