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Midwest Housing Developer Accused of Housing Discrimination

Civil Rights Organizations File Federal Lawsuit against Buckingham Realty and Development Corp. and Several Co-Defendants for Fair Housing Act Violations in Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana

WASHINGTON, DC — The National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana and HOPE Fair Housing Center have filed a lawsuit against Midwest developer Buckingham Realty and Development Corp. and co-defendants Buckingham Construction Corp.; Buckingham Management, LLC; Buckingham MR, LLC; Grand Prairie Apartments, LLC; Michigan Road Partners, LLC; Providence Housing Partners, LLC; Providence HUD, LLC; and Springhurst Housing Partners, LLC, alleging discrimination against people with disabilities under the Fair Housing Act.

The lawsuit is based on a joint investigation by NFHA, the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana in Indianapolis and HOPE Fair Housing Center in Wheaton, IL, of four properties located in Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana. The design and construction accessibility requirements of the Federal Fair Housing Act went into effect in March 1991 – more than two decades ago. Those provisions require that apartment and condominium complexes contain seven basic accessibility features for people with disabilities.

The lawsuit alleges that since at least 2001, the accused co-defendants have engaged in a continuous pattern or practice of discrimination against people with disabilities by designing and/or constructing multifamily dwellings, and common- and public-use areas, without the required accessibility features.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and familial status.

“It has been more than 20 years since the effective date of the Fair Housing Act’s accessibility requirements and builders are continuing to build apartments that effectively bar people with disabilities from the premises,” said **Morgan Williams, Director of Enforcement and Investigations of the National Fair Housing Alliance**. “It’s unfortunate to see the violations we do when developers now have clear and straightforward federal standards to follow to ensure that properties are accessible for everyone. Discrimination is illegal and violators of the law must be held accountable.”

“When people with disabilities are barred from our communities because of inaccessible properties we are all diminished,” said **Anne Houghtaling, Executive Director of HOPE Fair Housing in Wheaton, Illinois**. “It’s an on-going struggle for people with disabilities to find accessible affordable housing in communities that are vibrant and offer real opportunities. The limited supply of housing built after 1991 must be constructed in an accessible fashion. It’s not only the law; it’s the right thing to do.”

“Providing curbs without curb cuts, building doors too narrow for a wheelchair and creating inaccessible routes to public- and common-use areas are some of the ways that Buckingham Realty and Development and its co-defendants have made their properties inaccessible and unwelcoming for people with disabilities,” said **Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana in Indianapolis**. “These developers and managers might as well hang up signs that read, ‘People with Disabilities Are Not Allowed.’”

The lawsuit names a number of ways in which the properties designed and constructed by the accused co-defendants are inaccessible. These include: steps; excessive running slopes; primary entry doors with handles that require tight grasping and twisting; accessible parking without the required access aisle for people with mobility impairments to leave or enter their parked vehicles; curbs without curb cuts; doors that are too narrow; and kitchens and bathrooms with insufficient maneuvering space for wheelchair users at sinks and toilets.

The apartment complexes with alleged violations are: Apartments at Grand Prairie in Peoria, IL; Champion Farms Apartments in Louisville, KY; Providence at Old Meridian in Carmel, IN; and The Reserve at Williams Glen in Zionsville, IN.

The National Fair Housing Alliance, HOPE Fair Housing and the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana are represented by Relman, Dane, and Colfax PLLC, a civil rights law firm based in Washington, DC.

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The National Fair Housing Alliance (www.nationalfairhousing.org)

Founded in 1988, the National Fair Housing Alliance is a consortium of more than 220 private, non-profit fair housing organizations, state and local civil rights agencies, and individuals from throughout the United States. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the National Fair Housing Alliance, through comprehensive education, advocacy and enforcement programs, provides equal access to apartments, houses, mortgage loans and insurance policies for all residents in the nation.

HOPE Fair Housing Center (www.hopefair.org)

Established in 1968, HOPE is the oldest fair housing center in Illinois. HOPE Fair Housing Center seeks to end the hurt and devastation of housing discrimination and segregation because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, or any other characteristics protected under state or local laws.

Fair Housing Center for Central Indiana (www.fhcci.org)

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, non-profit fair housing organization founded in 2011. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education and outreach.