

- IF you think you have encountered discrimination because of your sexual orientation,
- IF you have any questions, or
- IF you want more information,



The Massachusetts Fair Housing Center (MFHC) is a private, non-profit fair housing organization serving central and western Massachusetts. MFHC's mission is to enforce the civil rights laws; educate tenants, landlords, and community groups in fair housing practices; and assist people who have experienced housing discrimination.

Call MFHC, we will:

- Listen to your story and collect important information;
- Thoroughly investigate your complaint;
- Review the results of the investigation with you and determine if there is a basis for a legal case.

If evidence of discrimination is sufficient, MFHC will help you file a complaint with the appropriate agency or refer you to an MFHC trained attorney to file a lawsuit.

Services to victims of discrimination are provided by MFHC at no charge.

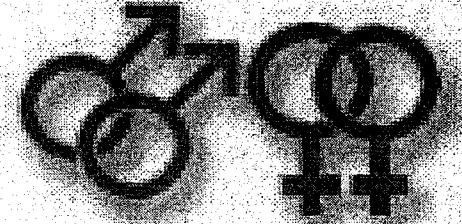
*Remember: Always document your housing search. Keep records of where you call and whom you speak to. Documentation is key in the investigation process.

Call Toll Free: 1-800-675-7309

57 Suffolk Street, Holyoke, MA 01040
www.massfairhousing.org
info@massfairhousing.org
 Voice/TTY 413-539-9796 ext. 101
 Fax 413-533-9978

*This publication is available in Spanish and other languages upon request.

Fair Housing & Sexual Orientation



1-800-675-7309

*Fighting Discrimination
Opening Doors*

Fair Housing for Individuals Regardless of Sexual Orientation

THE LAW

The Massachusetts anti-discrimination law found at *M.G.L.ch. 151B, §§4(6) and 4(7)* states that *it is illegal for any housing provider to discriminate against any individual because of such individual's sexual orientation.* In addition, it is also illegal to inquire, either written or verbally, about a person's sexual orientation.

M.G.L.ch. 151B, §4(7B) makes it *illegal for any housing provider, newspaper, or other person to make, print or publish any written statement that indicates preference, limitation, or discrimination based on sexual orientation.*

& WHO IT APPLIES TO

This law applies to *owners, lessees, landlords, subleases, real estate brokers, managing agents,* and any agents of these housing providers. *However,* buildings in which there are two apartment units, one of which is occupied by the owner, are exempt from this law. All other landlords and owners must abide by this law.

COMMON FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION:

✓ **MISREPRESENTING THE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING** → A landlord, owner, or real estate agent tells you that the housing is unavailable, when in fact; it has not been rented or sold.

✓ **DISCRIMINATORY ADVERTISING** → Any written statement in a newspaper or other publication; or any oral statement that indicates preferences or limitations for people based on sexual orientation. That includes any advertisement or brochure that is created by the owner of the property or someone working on their behalf.

✓ **REFUSAL TO RENT OR SELL** → A landlord, real estate agent, or other housing provider cannot refuse to rent or sell housing accommodations because of the sexual orientation of the applicants.

✓ **DISCRIMINATION IN TERMS OR CONDITIONS** → A landlord, owner, real estate agent, or other housing provider may not impose different terms or conditions on a person simply because of that person's sexual orientation. For example, a landlord or other housing provider cannot ask questions about where tenants will sleep to determine if a couple is homosexual. In addition, a lender or homeowner insurance agent

cannot refuse to include the income of both partners when calculating eligibility simply because the couple is gay.

✓ **USE OF THREATS, INTIMIDATION, OR COERCION** → Someone attempts to prevent a person from renting or buying a house in a neighborhood by suggesting the person will not be safe or that neighbors do not want the person to move in, or the person protected by the law will be harmed, or that his or her belongings will be harmed.

Sexual Orientation & Marital Status:

In addition to protections with respect to sexual orientation, gay and lesbian couples are also protected by laws against marital status discrimination. In addition to protections for sexual orientation, Massachusetts Fair Housing laws offer protection to couples regardless of their legal marital status. Same sex couples cannot be discriminated against in housing because they are living together either as an unmarried or married couple.¹

¹ There has as of yet been no conclusive court ruling with respect to religious objections to marital status discrimination.