



State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

Respect...Integrity...Effective Communication

May 22, 2025

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MCCR AND ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCE MAJOR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION SETTLEMENTS TO PROTECT SOURCE OF INCOME RIGHTS

BALTIMORE, MD – On the heels of a landmark ruling in [*State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and Tonya Wood v. Cheryl Sawyers \(Trustee\) and Rachel Wilson*](#), the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) and the Office of the Attorney General's Civil Rights Division (CRD) have announced another major breakthrough in the fight against housing discrimination.

Following a joint investigation, MCCR and CRD reached a significant settlement with **Habitat America, LLC** and **The Commons of Avalon TH, LLLP**, stemming from allegations that **tenants who used housing vouchers were subjected to higher rent increases** than other tenants at a Frederick, Maryland apartment complex.

The investigation, backed by compelling evidence, found that this practice violated **Maryland's fair housing law**, which includes strong protections against **source of income discrimination**.

Under the terms of the settlement, the housing providers have agreed to:

- Reimburse affected households for excess rent paid
- Pay up to \$2,500 per household in additional damages
- Pay \$105,000 in civil penalties
- Update internal policies and conduct fair housing training for staff
- Submit regular reports on rental practices to MCCR and CRD

A Statement from Executive Director Cleveland L. Horton II

"This moment is about more than rent. It's about **respect, dignity, and justice**. When we allow housing providers to penalize people for using vouchers – many of whom are seniors, single parents, people with disabilities, or workers simply trying to survive – we are endorsing a two-tiered system of access.

Let me be clear: **Maryland law prohibits source of income discrimination**. And under this administration, that law is not just words on paper - it's a **mandate we intend to enforce boldly, consistently, and unapologetically**.

"Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination."

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We are not just correcting bad behavior. We are setting a new expectation: **Equity is not optional. Accountability is not negotiable. And justice is not delayed.**”

This announcement reinforces the clear message that **discrimination in housing – no matter how subtle, institutional, or normalized – will be met with full legal consequence.**

The settlement comes amid rising reports of **source of income discrimination** across Maryland, especially against voucher holders. This follows a historic court victory last month in *MCCR v. Sawyers & Wilson*, where the Circuit Court for Montgomery County issued sweeping relief, penalties, and a public injunction.