

Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. ®

Leading the Fight A

We provide free legal aid to people with civil legal problems in western New York.

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Leading the Fight Against Housing Discrimination for 18 Years

Justice Notes: April 2017

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LEADING THE FIGHT AGAINST HOUSING DISCRIMINATION FOR 18 YEARS

The Fair Housing Enforcement Project at LawNY®

Since launching in 1998, the Fair Housing Enforcement Project (FHEP) at Legal Assistance of Western New York Inc. (LawNY®) has championed the fight against housing discrimination in Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne and Yates counties. FHEP investigates complaints of housing discrimination, and where discrimination is found, enforces the Fair Housing Act. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits the denial of housing to a person based on the person's membership in one or more of the classes protected under the Fair Housing Act. The protected classes are **race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability**. Through outreach, investigation, advocacy and litigation, FHEP obtains meaningful outcomes and policy changes for victims of discrimination.

Outreach and Education: FHEP educates individuals, tenant associations, property management groups, and the staff of human service organizations about their rights and obligations under federal, state, and local fair housing laws through outreach events, trainings and an annual conference. FHEP has free materials available, in both English and Spanish, with specific brochures for Veterans and individuals with emotional support animals.

Investigation: FHEP employs a Rural and an Urban Testing Coordinator. Testing is an enforcement tool used by virtually every private, non-profit fair housing organization as well as the U. S. Department of Justice. It is a controlled investigative procedure that provides an objective method of observing and measuring differences in quantity, content and quality of information given in a housing transaction. This information helps determine whether or not unlawful discrimination has occurred. All testing activities performed by LawNY® conform to the standards and methodologies approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Litigation: FHEP provides legal representation, advice, referrals, and information to individuals who have experienced housing discrimination. When a case has sufficient merit, FHEP attorneys will provide litigation in U.S. District Court to remove discriminatory barriers and obtain compensation for clients' hardships. Since 1998, FHEP has filed dozens of lawsuits resulting in well over a million dollars of aggregate recoveries for our clients, and amendments to illegal local ordinances, illegal occupancy policies and the retro-fitting of housing units to make them accessible to persons with disabilities.

About LawNY: LawNY® is a not-for-profit corporation established to provide access to justice to low-income people and other vulnerable populations who have civil legal problems. LawNY® was formed in 2004 through the merger of several local, established, not-for-profit law firms. LawNY® has 7 offices, which are located in Bath, Elmira, Geneva, Ithaca, Jamestown, Olean, and Rochester. LawNY® provides legal assistance to individuals in 14 counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates. The Rochester office of LawNY®, formerly known as the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, was founded in 1968.

The Fair Housing Enforcement Project at LawNY® employs a team of dedicated, experienced staff that are committed to the mission of fair and equal housing opportunity.



Robin Marable, our Project Director, has been representing clients in fair housing matters since 2009. She also assists in investigating complaints and providing presentations to community groups. Ms. Marable is a 2002 graduate of Pennsylvania State University - Dickinson School of Law. She has 12 years of litigation practice and has experience working on FHEP cases for the past 7 years.

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Laurie Lambrix, our Deputy Director of Litigation and Advocacy, has a long

history of civic engagement and service. She served as Project Director from 1998 to 2016 and continues to provide litigation support to the project. Ms. Lambrix is an experienced attorney and has litigated dozens of fair housing complaints in federal court.

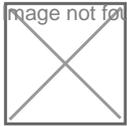
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Grace Zaiman, our Staff Attorney, joined the Fair Housing Enforcement Project

staff in the Fall of 2015. As part of the project, Ms. Zaiman provides legal advice and representation to clients. Prior to joining the Project, Ms. Zaiman served as an AmeriCorps Equal Justice Works Fellow focusing on employment matters, and has additional experience in practice areas such as immigration law, family law, and housing law. Ms. Zaiman attended William Mitchell College of Law from which she graduated from *cum laude*, before clerking for the Honorable Gary Pagliaccetti.

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Marlene Attardo, our Staff Attorney, joined the Fair Housing Enforcement Project

in the Fall of 2016. As part of the project, Ms. Attardo provides legal advice and representation to clients. Ms. Attardo has over ten years' litigation experience and previously owned and operated a law firm specializing in family law while also serving as a Staff Attorney with Volunteer Legal Services Project. Prior to joining the Project, Ms. Attardo served as a Staff Attorney in our office, with a focus on kinship care issues. Ms. Attardo is a 1992 graduate of the Duquesne University School of Law. Ms. Attardo is a past recipient of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York's Stephanie E. Kupferman Juvenile Justice Award and the Honorable Michael F. Dillon Attorney for Children Award in June 2012

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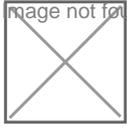


Osbaldo Arce, our Rural Test Coordinator, has over 25 years of professional

legal experience including 9 years as a Testing Coordinator. At this position Mr. Arce has conducted over 600 individual housing tests and trained over 300 volunteer testers. He has also completed almost 40 hours of training in fair housing enforcement techniques sponsored by the National Fair Housing Alliance and Fair Housing Legal Center at the

John Marshall Law School. He has also completed three trainings conducted by HUD, including the Investigative Support for Testing and Enforcement Program and Mentorship Program.

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Lorna Saltibus, our Urban Test Coordinator, has over 35 years of legal experience including 15 years as a Testing Coordinator. Ms. Saltibus has conducted over 700 tests and trained over 400 volunteer testers. Ms. Saltibus has also attended several trainings on fair housing enforcement testing techniques conducted by the National Fair Housing Alliance, and has participated in the Investigative Support for Testing and Enforcement Programs Test Coordinator Training and Mentorship Program sponsored by HUD.

Fast Facts About the Fair Housing Enforcement Project (FHEP) at LawNY

- Launched in 1998, seven staff members work on the Project. Testing and enforcement activities are conducted by the 5 staff members highlighted above.
 - To combat housing discrimination, FHEP:
 - Educates individuals and organizations about Fair Housing
 - Investigates complaints of housing discrimination
 - Enforces the Fair Housing Act where discrimination is found; enforcement is accomplished through litigation, settlements, and agreements.
 - FHEP **only pursues enforcement on behalf of a client.**
 - There are **no income eligibility requirements** for FHEP services.
 - All FHEP services are **provided free of charge.**
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- Since its inception, testing and enforcement activities have resulted in settlements for claimants totaling over \$1,400,000 and changes in fair housing policy and practice affecting well over 10,000 housing units through cases brought in U.S. District Court by project attorneys.
 - FHEP has committed partnerships with Rochester Housing Authority, Geneva Human Rights Commission, and Veterans Outreach Center.
 - In 2015 alone, the Fair Housing Enforcement Project:
 - Opened over 100 cases for investigation
 - Obtained almost 40 reasonable accommodations
 - Obtained approximately \$150,000 in compensation for victims, either by court order or settlement
 - Conducted 120 systemic and complaint-based tests
 - Conducted 37 outreach sessions to the community.

If you feel you may have been discriminated against you can contact the Fair Housing Enforcement Project at: 1-888-671-3247

If you are part of a group or an organization and would like to have a presentation about Fair Housing, please call LawNY[®] at 585-325-2520.

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<http://www.lawny.org/node/149/leading-fight-against-housing-discrimination-18-years>

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