



# FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

Volume I — 2021

## FHCWM Year in Review: 2020

### Case Trends and Outcomes

Like many, the FHCWM worked hard to overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic to successfully provide its enforcement, advocacy, education, and outreach services in unique and creative ways. The FHCWM managed a total of 242 fair housing cases, 176 of which were newly initiated in 2020. The 176 cases resulted from 193 separate fair housing allegations and involved properties in 38 different municipalities spanning 14 counties. The majority of the cases represented discrimination as part of a rental transaction (56%) followed by denials of or other barriers related to requests for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities (28%). Other cases involved discrimination in sales (4%), mortgage transactions (3%), and advertising (2%); the FHCWM also had cases related to illegal harassment (3%) because of a protected class. For the 6th year in a row, allegations of disability-based discrimination led the cases filed with the FHCWM representing 54% of the total cases, followed by allegations of race (17%), and familial status (also 17%) based discrimination (see p. 2 for more detail).

As a result of diligent casework, the FHCWM was able to open up an incredible total of 74,082 units from housing discrimination across west Michigan and beyond. This includes 624 senior housing units, ... (cont. p. 2)

## Save the Date!

### FHCWM 33rd Annual Event

The FHCWM is pleased to announce that plans are underway for the first-ever **virtual** annual Fair Housing Workshop Series. Please mark your calendars and save the date for Thursday, **April 22, 2021!** Our theme is "Toward the Goal of Justice Together."

**Bryan Greene** (Director of Fair Housing, National Association of REALTORS) will



provide the keynote presentation. We are also excited to welcome **Dr. George Lipsitz**,

Professor at University of California, Santa Barbara to our lineup of expert speakers. We will likely be following our traditional timeline of 8:15 am start however we will be offering a slightly



different agenda to allow for meaningful engagement, inspiring content, and increased accessibility. The FHCWM will continue to post updates for plans including registration to our website and social media as soon as they come available. Please stay tuned: [www.fhcwm.org/lws/](http://www.fhcwm.org/lws/) and [www.facebook.com/fhcwm](https://www.facebook.com/fhcwm).

## Board of Directors Update

The FHCWM would like to sincerely thank two outgoing Board of Director members: **Sarah Lucas** (Forethought Community) and **Troy Zapolski** (Inner Circle Holdings). Mr. Zapolski has served on the board since 2009. He has provided invaluable insight into proactively identifying fair housing concerns in large multi-family rental communities. He strongly encouraged the FHCWM's growth in providing regular practical and technical fair housing training beginning with his time at Land & Company thereby expanding the FHCWM menu and capacity for fair housing trainings on compliance and best practices.

Ms. Lucas joined the board in 2016 after being instrumental to the success of the FHCWM expanding fair housing services to Grand Traverse County in 2011. She facilitated meaningful connections for the FHCWM, represented a fair housing voice at many tables across the region, and ensured that fair housing was included in her work with Networks Northwest as well as Housing North.

The FHCWM is very grateful for to you both for lending us your time, perspective, and many talents, Sarah and Troy, in addition to your active commitment to fair housing!


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**FHCWM Year in Review...** (cont.) which are in high demand. Further, the FHCWM assisted 19 people in securing reasonable accommodations or modifications; 34 reasonable accommodations were made; and 14 reasonable modifications permitted. These changes can significantly increase the safety, health, independence, and well-being of people with disabilities in their housing. Examples of common reasonable accommodations include an assigned accessible parking space or permission to have an assistance animal; common modification requests include ramps, lever door handles, tub cuts, and grab bars.

Furthermore, the FHCWM conducted 269 fair housing tests in order to investigate housing discrimination and fair housing practices. Throughout 2020, the FHCWM saw high evidence rates in testing on the following federal protected classes: gender (71%), disability—physical (50%), disability—other (33%), familial status (29%), and race (27%). Gender discrimination can include sexual harassment in housing, such as requests for unwanted sexual relationships or inappropriate photos in exchange for housing or maintenance services.

In 2020, the FHCWM provided education and outreach to 22,321 people and distributed thousands of fair housing materials electronically and in print. Also, over 1,345 housing professionals received fair housing training focused on best practices and compliance in renting, selling, marketing, and managing housing. Staff provided just under 64 hours of one-on-one technical assistance focused on



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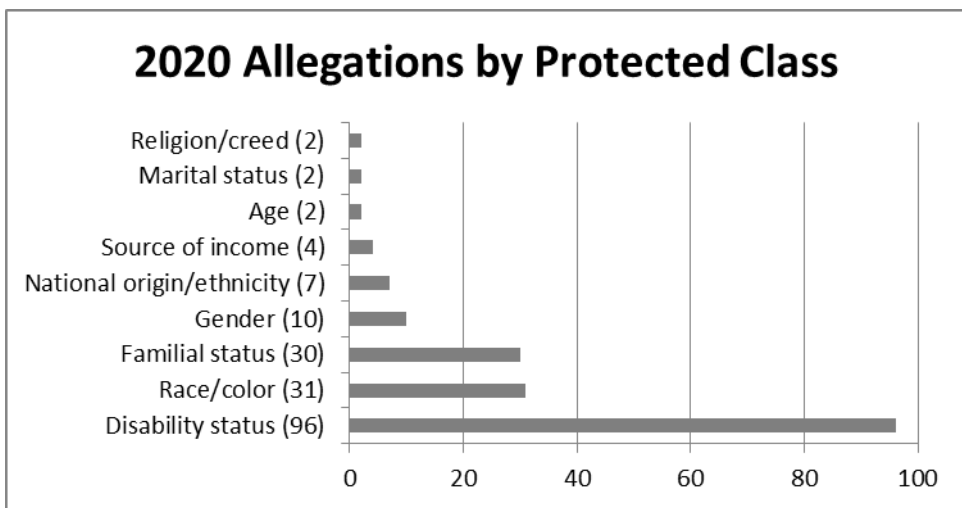
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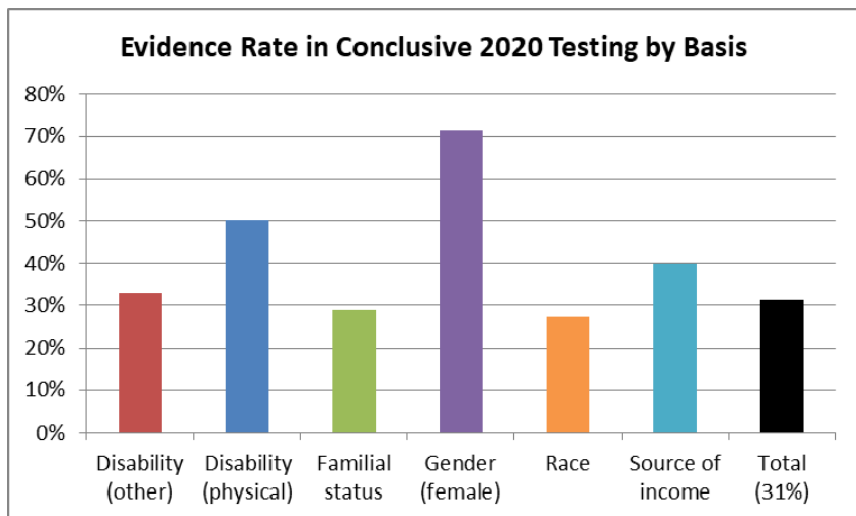
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fair housing compliance and best practices to 142 unduplicated members of the housing industry.

More than 600 community members received fair housing rights training, as well as, 252 elementary and high school students. The FHCWM is very pleased to continue to partner with the teaching artists of The Diatribe to offer our Writing to Right Wrongs 9-week program to 4 area high schools. Staff also provided virtual readings of children’s books on fair housing and the importance of welcoming communities for the first time in 2020! Please contact us if you’d like to learn more about these services. Stay tuned to [fhcwm.org/annualreports](http://fhcwm.org/annualreports) to learn more.



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**Protected classes under law include race, color, national origin, religion, family status, marital status, gender, age and disability.**

# Thank You to our 2020 Members & '40 More Years' Donors!

Our members further fair housing efforts by providing much needed support for programs and services that would otherwise go unfunded. Because of their generous support, we raised over \$13,802 for FHCWM education and outreach programs!

## Special Thanks to Our Supporting Members

- Elaine Isely
- John Hunting
- Mercantile Bank
- Tim Reimink
- Kate Wolters

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\* Members who contributed to the \$40 for 40 more years campaign.



We are very grateful for ALL of our members, especially given that 2020 — our 40th year of providing fair housing education, advocacy, and enforcement services in west Michigan — was like nothing we could have ever imagined. Thank you for choosing to support us!!!

Please visit our web site: [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org)

# ...Fair Housing Center News & Events...

**Kent County  
Senior Millage**



## FHCWM Services Funded by Kent County Senior Millage

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce an award of continued funding under the Kent County Senior Millage (KCSM). The FHCWM will continue to seek to promote independence and dignity for Kent County seniors both in their homes and the community through the provision of our two-pronged approach of education and enforcement for Kent County residents who are at least 60 years old. The KCSM is administered by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. In 2021, the millage is set to provide \$12,181,407 in funding to contract 34 agencies for 56 unique services!

### Fair Housing Rights & Best Practices Materials Library!

Did you know? The FHCWM has a LOT of information on fair housing rights and fair housing responsibilities available on our website. You can search for fair housing information organized by protected classes (such as for seniors, families with children, persons with Limited English Proficiency) and by topic (advertising, zoning, condo associations) and much more! You can find links to federal guidance and FHCWM-produced materials at this page of our website: [www.fhcwm.org/publications](http://www.fhcwm.org/publications).

### Fair Housing Trainings

The Fair Housing Center offers fair housing trainings, including Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Each training is 3 hours and includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

Some sessions are held at the Fair Housing Center; we can also come to your location. Call Liz Keegan at (616) 451-2980 to learn more or register.

**Check our website home page for upcoming dates: [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org).**

The Fair Housing Center hosts **tester trainings** each month. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a stipend in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, one training will take place during business hours while the other will be held in the evening. For the specific training dates, to register, or any other questions contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980.

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