



HOME
Housing Opportunities Made Equal

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WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Vol. 60 No. 3 • FALL 2023

INSIGHT

HOME
Housing Opportunities Made Equal



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY IN HOUSING

By Cierra Fields

Fair housing supporters from all over Western New York will gather for Housing Opportunities Made Equal's 60th Anniversary Gala, on October 27th, at the Atrium at Rich's. WGRZ's Claudine Ewing will serve as MC.

This year's theme is "60 and Counting..." and commences with a 5:30 pm social hour. Guests will enjoy dinner, dancing, a silent auction showcasing Buffalo Bills items, basket raffle, live artwork and much, much more! To reflect on 60 years, HOME will also be screening a short video showcasing their history of fair housing work for the past six decades and the leaders who made great contributions to the organization's mission.

"Luck did not bring us to 60 years of this work," said Executive Director DeAnna Eason. "The dedication, courage, strength, and love for humankind of a small group

of like-minded individuals have brought us to this day. We honor those who stood in the face of hatred and fought for the equal rights of all."

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Highlights of the evening will also include the presentation of the Agents of Change Award, recognizing the work of individuals who have provided significant contribution to the service of fair housing and equal rights in the past, present, and future. Award honorees are Attorney James Myers, Heather Abraham and the UB Law and Transparency Clinic, and advocate Austin Von Martin.

To support HOME's work fighting housing discrimination or to learn more about the event, please scan the QR code below or go to homeny.org/dinner.



Published through the generous support of contributors to HOME

HOME 60
Housing Opportunities Made Equal

Anniversary Gala

Friday, October 27, 2023
5:30-9:30pm
Atrium at Rich's

**Basket Raffle & Auction,
Music, Fun and so much
more!!**

by providing a guarantee to landlords that the county will pay for damages caused by the tenant up to the amount of a regular security deposits. So while the city's law excluded this type of agreement from its source of income protections because there is no up-front cash transfer, the county's law protected people receiving this vital form of assistance from being denied housing on that basis.

A year later, a statewide coalition called Ban Income Bias, of which HOME was a member, successfully pushed New York State to add source of income protections at the state level. The state also added protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2019.

After spending its entire existence renting office space, HOME embarked on a large campaign to raise funds to purchase a building of its own, beginning in 2009. After assembling nearly \$2.7 million in public and private support, HOME purchased a vacant but architecturally significant building at the corner of Main and Ferry Streets in Buffalo, built ten units of barrier-free, energy-efficient affordable housing, and created a "Home for HOME," which we moved into in 2012. Since then, HOME's staffing has expanded to the point that we needed a second office. Our office at 135 Delaware now houses our investigations and education staff.

While the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for HOME—but even more so for the clients we serve—we have emerged strengthened and with expanded capacity to address the housing needs of Western New Yorkers. While we wish our services were not so sorely needed, the fight for civil rights has no finish line and we will continue the fight we have fought for the past 60 years for as long as we are needed. ▲▲▲▲▲

HOME THROUGH THE YEARS: PART 3

By Steven Haagsma

As HOME celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2023, we want to look back at how we got here through a series of articles about our history. This story is part 3. If you missed the previous parts, check out our *Insight* archive on our website at homeny.org/publications!

HOME has grown throughout the 21st century, expanding services and staffing and, critically, moving into the building we now call home. HOME has also been at the forefront of multiple advances in local and state policy, improving statutory protections for tenants and subsequently fighting to enforce those laws.

In 2006, the City of Buffalo finally passed a fair housing law, over 20 years after a HOME-supported law nearly passed, but fell victim to a mayoral veto. This law added protections based on source of income, a vital advance, helping tenants with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and other forms of rental assistance obtain housing that they may previously have been denied from.

Over a decade after the passage of the city law, HOME and its allies succeeded in a campaign to pass a similar law at the county level. Erie County's law was passed in 2018 and included similar protections to the city's law, but importantly had a broader definition of "source of income" that included security deposit agreements through the Department of Social Services, which the city's law had excluded. Security deposit agreements help tenants who are not able to afford a security deposit obtain housing



NFHA RELEASES 2023 FAIR HOUSING TRENDS REPORT

By Steven Haagsma



Every year, the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) releases a report detailing the latest trends in housing discrimination and fair housing efforts across the country. The 2023 report, containing data from 2022, finds that the number of housing discrimination reports in the country was at an all-time high last year. The 33,000 complaints reported marked a nearly 6% increase over the previous year and are more than in any other year since NFHA began compiling records in the 1990s. Non-profit fair housing organizations such as HOME processed nearly 75% of these complaints, with public agencies accounting for the remainder.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Over half of the discrimination complaints reported to NFHA were on the basis of disability. While discrimination based on disability is one of the most common types of complaints we receive at HOME, they made up more than twice the proportion of complaints nationwide as here in Western New York. NFHA also reported an increase in discrimination based on source of income, another one of the most common types of reports received by HOME. Of the four most common types of discrimination complaints processed by HOME, three (race, disability, and source of income) were also among the most common nationwide, despite source of income not being protected at the federal level. The other type of complaint most common in Western New York is familial status, which is discrimination against households with children under the age of 18. It was the third most common type of discrimination complaint processed by HOME in 2022, making up more than double the share of our cases as it does nationwide.

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FAIR HOUSING PROGRESS

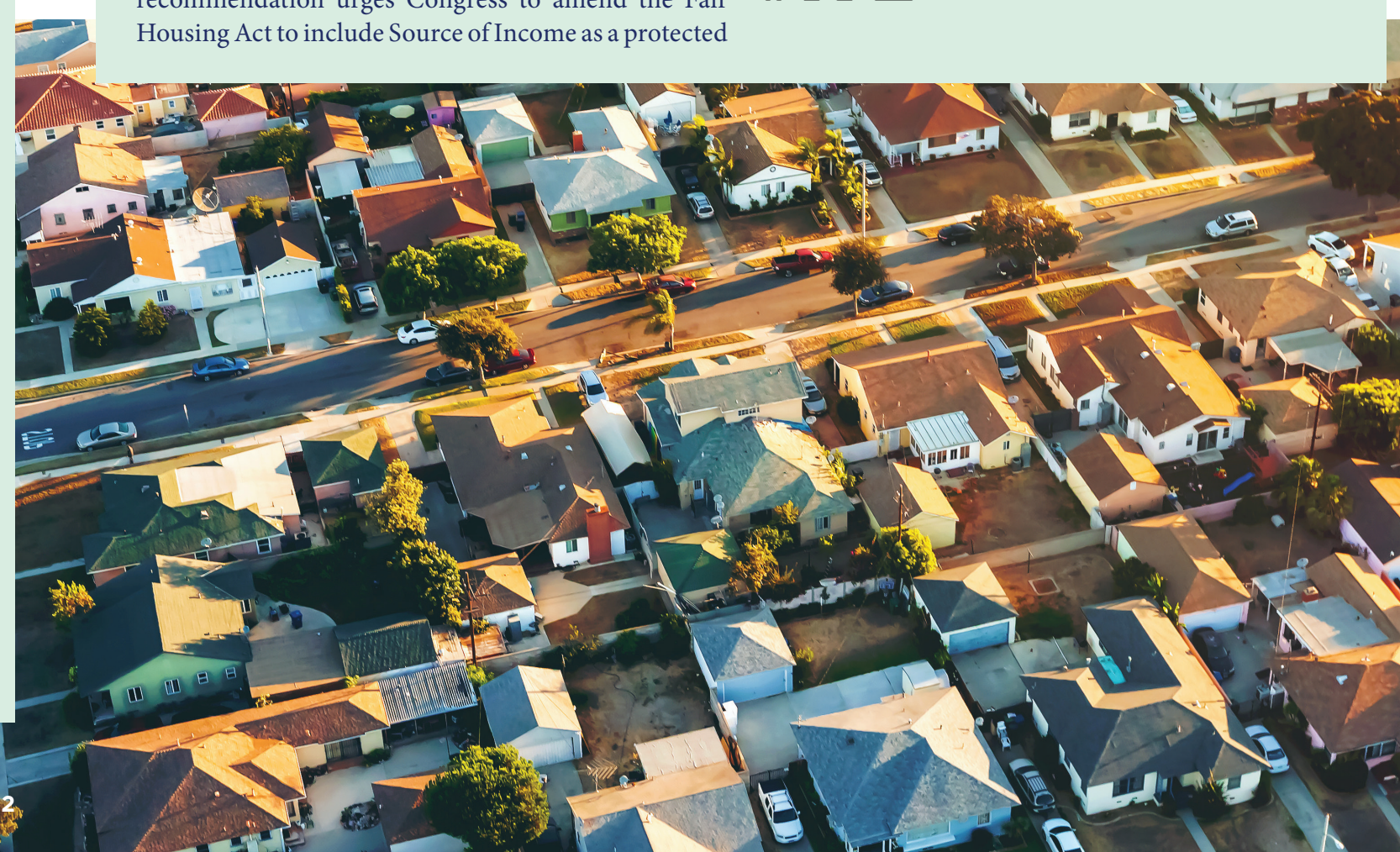
The NFHA report includes highlights of cases brought by member organizations such as HOME in 2022. Among the cases highlighted is the Clover case brought by a coalition of organizations, including HOME, which we have written about in previous issues of Insight. Another milestone fair housing case in 2022 was a settlement achieved by the Department of Justice regarding Meta, the parent company of Facebook. The settlement requires Facebook to stop using algorithmic targeting for housing advertisements on its platform, a major advancement in the fight against algorithmic bias.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, NFHA makes recommendations for policy progress to continue advancing fair housing nationwide. One of these recommendations is for Congress to appropriate more funds for private, non-profit fair housing organizations such as HOME. This is important because nearly three quarters of fair housing complaints brought in 2022 were processed by these organizations, so adequate funding is essential in the fight against housing discrimination. Another recommendation urges Congress to amend the Fair Housing Act to include Source of Income as a protected

class. We are fortunate to enjoy this protection at multiple levels of government in Western New York (the state, Erie County, Buffalo, Hamburg, and West Seneca all have Source of Income protections), but adding it as a federal protection would improve the efficacy of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and increase housing opportunity for low-income renters around the country. NFHA also urges HUD to strengthen fair housing enforcement. Specifically, the report notes that while HUD has the authority to pursue Secretary-initiated complaints, it only opened two new such cases in all of 2022. Further recommendations include more vigorous enforcement of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing mandate and addressing appraisal bias.

As always, NFHA's Fair Housing Trends Report is an important check-up on the state of fair housing in this country. This year's data shows that HOME is not alone in seeing an increase in housing discrimination complaints and reinforces that much work remains to be done. To read the full report, including more statistics regarding discrimination complaints and the full list of NFHA's recommendations, scan the QR code. ▲▲▲▲



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Q&A HOME'S NEWEST TEAM ADDITIONS

What did you do before you came to HOME?

What excites you about working for HOME?

What hobbies or interests do you have outside of work?

EMILY CRIST FAIR HOUSING SPECIALIST

Prior to joining HOME, I studied French, Political Science, and Psychology. My academic focus was on the politics of language and culture, especially in decolonial Francophone contexts. While attending college, I was an intern for the resettlement department of a refugee center and a barista. More recently, I worked as a Graduate Student Assistant for the Office of Accessibility Resources at the University at Buffalo.

I am excited to work for HOME because their emphasis on defending and improving access to Fair Housing is a mission for which I am deeply passionate. Although it is often an invisible issue, I believe that housing stability is emblematic of multiple systemic barriers in our society. I look forward to implementing my skills in document analysis and communication in order to assist individuals with navigating Fair Housing resources, as well as empowering them to advocate for their protected rights.

My hobbies include reading, trying new drink recipes with my at-home coffee station, and doing genealogical research.

TREVOR MOOMAW HOUSING PLACEMENT SPECIALIST

I worked in Admissions for People Inc. I helped families enroll in People Inc.'s programs and services.

Affordable housing is almost non-existent and tenants and landlords deserve to know their rights. Helping people find housing and ensure that justice is being served really revs my engine.

I like playing volleyball, riding my bike, walking my dog, and kayaking.