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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Takes Action on Open Housing Cases

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), is enforcing the state’s Open Housing Law.

“After years in which prior administrations didn’t use the authority that Wisconsin DOJ has to enforce fair housing protections, we are once again enforcing those laws,” said Attorney General Kaul. “With DOJ working together with DWD, we can ensure that the protections provided in our Open Housing Law make a difference for more Wisconsinites and that more of those who violate that law are held accountable.”

"At a time of great national housing insecurity as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, DWD is proud of our renewed partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Justice to take strong action to address inequities in residential housing," DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said.

The Wisconsin Open Housing Law protects the rights of people in the rental, purchase, building, insuring, or financing of housing. It is unlawful to discriminate against a person in housing because of that person's protected class: race, color of a person’s skin, family status, disability, sex, national origin, religion, marital status, ancestry, source of income, sexual orientation, age, or status as a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking. Below are recent examples of results obtained in DOJ led matters:

- *State v. Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter, Inc.*: A consent judgment provided injunctive relief and \$17,500 to the complainant who alleged race discrimination and retaliation.
- *Kalie Mullins v. Goodletson Management, LLC, et al.*: A settlement agreement provided \$16,500 to the complainant after she was allegedly discriminated against because of a disability.
- *Tabatha Lamp-Sawall v. Patrick Bently, et al.*: A settlement agreement provided the complainant \$17,500 after the tenant was allegedly discriminated against because of a disability.
- *DWD v. Mexus Properties, LLC*: Following a civil suit, a circuit court entered an order barring eviction while DWD investigates and resolves a discrimination complaint it received.
- *DWD v. Gary Nelson et al.*: Following a civil suit, a circuit court entered an order barring eviction while DWD investigates and resolves a discrimination complaint it received.
- *James Yarbrough v. Richard McKenzie, et al.*: Helped negotiate a lease extension to prevent an eviction while a fair housing investigation was ongoing.
- *Denielle Hintz v. Supattar Voborsky, et al.*: Prevented landlord from filing for eviction while a fair housing investigation was ongoing.

These cases were handled by the DOJ Division of Legal Services (DLS) Public Protection Unit. The unit enforces the laws that protect consumers and natural resources in Wisconsin.

Wis. Statute § 106.50 gives DOJ the authority to prosecute housing complaints referred from DWD and to seek temporary judicial relief to preserve an individual's housing rights and/or halt eviction proceedings while a complaint is pending. However previous DOJ administrations neglected to seek these remedies on fair housing referrals. When Attorney General Kaul took office in 2019, he began directing DOJ to take action on these referrals.

For more information about discrimination in housing and how to file a complaint, go to the [DWD website](#).