

# Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc.

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*Serving low-income clients in all 100 counties of North Carolina*

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## For Immediate Release

### Fair housing enforcement in N.C. gets boost from \$325,000 federal grant to Legal Aid project

**Raleigh, N.C., October 16, 2014** – Employees of a housing organization demand sex in exchange for services. A town council fights construction of affordable housing for senior citizens. A county targets an African-American community for expansion of a landfill.

“Sadly, these are all real, recent examples of violations of fair housing law in North Carolina,” said Jeffrey Dillman, co-director of the Fair Housing Project, a special unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina and the state’s only private fair housing enforcement organization.



Dillman is celebrating yesterday's announcement from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarding the Raleigh-based group a Private Enforcement Initiative grant worth \$325,000 a year for the next three years. PEI grants fund nonprofit organizations that conduct testing and enforcement activities to prevent or eliminate discriminatory housing practices. The Fair Housing Project is the only group in North Carolina to receive these funds.

“This is great news,” said Dillman. “We’ve made some real progress in North Carolina, but housing discrimination is still far too prevalent here. Shelter is one of the most fundamental human needs, and it affects so much of people’s lives – their access to jobs and public transportation, where their children go to school, and whether they live in a healthy and safe community. It’s absolutely essential that everyone – regardless of their race, national origin, family status, physical ability, or other similar characteristic – has an equal opportunity under the law when it comes to housing.”

When Legal Aid of North Carolina launched the Fair Housing Project in 2011, the goal was to meet a critical need in the state that had gone unmet for far too long. From 2006 until the project launched, there was not a single private fair housing enforcement organization in North Carolina.

“Refusing to rent, steering, or altering the terms and conditions of a lease based on a landlord’s perception of a tenant’s immutable traits, such as race, national origin, disability, or familial status is not only just wrong, it’s against the law,” said George Hausen, executive director of Legal Aid of North Carolina. “Demanding sex from a tenant in exchange for a favorable housing decision or better lease terms is also against the law. The law prohibiting these nefarious practices has been around since 1968; yet, we see these cases every day. It’s our job to ensure

that every person has access to the decent, affordable housing of their choosing without suffering injury from these damaging acts.”

The Fair Housing Project fights housing discrimination by investigating complaints from individuals; conducting systemic, undercover investigations of landlords, property management companies and mortgage lenders; providing training to tenants, homeowners, landlords, government officials, and staff of homeless and domestic violence shelters; holding an annual conference in partnership with the City of Raleigh; conducting media outreach, and holding community education events.

North Carolinians with questions about their rights should call the project’s toll-free hotline at 1-855-797-FAIR (3247) or visit its website at [www.fairhousingnc.org](http://www.fairhousingnc.org).

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*Legal Aid of North Carolina is a statewide, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services in civil matters to low-income people in order to ensure equal access to justice and to remove legal barriers to economic opportunity. The Fair Housing Project works to eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity for all people in North Carolina through education, outreach, public policy initiatives, advocacy and enforcement. Learn more at [www.legalaidnc.org](http://www.legalaidnc.org) and [www.fairhousingnc.org](http://www.fairhousingnc.org).*

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