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An Act To Amend the Maine Human Rights Act

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §4581, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1989, c. 245, §3, is amended to read:

1. Number of occupants. Nothing in this subchapter limits the applicability of any reasonable local, state or federal restrictions regarding the maximum number of occupants permitted to occupy a dwelling. Nor does any provision in this ~~subsection~~subchapter regarding familial status apply with respect to housing for older persons.

Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §4582, 5th ¶, as amended by PL 1989, c. 245, §4, is further amended to read:

For any person furnishing rental premises or public accommodations to refuse to rent or impose different terms of tenancy to any individual who is a recipient of federal, state or local public assistance, including medical assistance and housing subsidies, primarily because of the individual's status as recipient or because of any requirement of such a public assistance program; or

Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §4582-A, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1991, c. 99, §18, is further amended to read:

1. Modifications. For any owner, lessee, sublessee, managing agent or other person having the right to sell, rent, lease or manage a housing accommodation; or any of their agents to refuse to permit, at the expense of ~~the~~a person with ~~physical~~physical or mental disability, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by that person if the modifications may be necessary to give that person full enjoyment of the premises, except that, with a rental, the landlord, when it is reasonable to do so, may condition permission for a modification on the renter's agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted; or

Sec. 4. 5 MRSA §4582-A, sub-§2, as enacted by PL 1989, c. 779, is amended to read:

2. Accommodations. For any owner, lessee, sublessee, managing agent or other person having the right to sell, rent, lease or manage a housing accommodation; or any of their agents to refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services when those accommodations are necessary to give ~~that person~~a person with physical or mental disability equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.

Sec. 5. 5 MRSA §4583, as amended by PL 2005, c. 10, §15, is further amended to read:

§ 4583. Application

Nothing in this Act may be construed to prohibit or limit the exercise of the privilege of every person and the agent of any person having the right to sell, rent, lease or manage a housing accommodation to set up and enforce specifications in the selling, renting, leasing or letting or in the furnishings of facilities or services in connection with the facilities that are consistent with business necessity and are

not based on the race, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, country of ancestral origin,~~or~~ familial status of or the receipt of public assistance payments ~~of~~by any prospective or actual purchaser, lessee, tenant or occupant. Nothing in this Act may be construed to prohibit or limit the exercise of the privilege of every person and the agent of any person making loans for or offering financial assistance in the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, repair or maintenance of housing accommodations; to set standards and preferences, terms, conditions, limitations or specifications for the granting of loans or financial assistance that are consistent with business necessity and are not based on the race, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, country of ancestral origin,~~or~~ familial status of or the receipt of public assistance payments ~~of~~by the applicant for a loan or financial assistance or of any existing or prospective owner, lessee, tenant or occupant of housing accommodation.

Sec. 6.5 MRSA §4612, sub-§1, ¶A, as amended by PL 1993, c. 578, §1, is further amended to read:

A. The commission or its delegated single commissioner or investigator shall provide an opportunity for the complainant and respondent to resolve the matter by settlement agreement prior to a determination of whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that unlawful discrimination has occurred. Evidence of conduct or statements made in compromise settlement negotiations, offers of settlement and any final agreement are confidential and may not be ~~made public~~disclosed without the written consent of the parties to the proceeding nor used as evidence in any subsequent proceeding, civil or criminal, except in a civil action alleging a breach of agreement filed by the commission or a party. Notwithstanding this paragraph, the commission and its employees have discretion to disclose such information to a party as is reasonably necessary to facilitate settlement. The commission may adopt rules providing for a 3rd-party neutral mediation program. The rules may permit one or more parties to a proceeding to agree to pay the costs of mediation. The commission may receive funds from any source for the purposes of implementing a 3rd-party neutral mediation program.

Sec. 7.5 MRSA §4612, sub-§1, ¶B, as enacted by PL 1985, c. 585, §1, is amended to read:

B. The commission or its delegated commissioner or investigator shall conduct such preliminary investigation as it ~~deems~~determines necessary to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that unlawful discrimination has occurred. In conducting an investigation, the commission, or its designated representative, ~~shall~~must have access at all reasonable times to premises, records, documents, individuals and other evidence or possible sources of evidence and may examine, record and copy those materials and take and record the testimony or statements of such persons as are reasonably necessary for the furtherance of the investigation. The commission may issue subpoenas to compel access to or production of those materials or the appearance of those persons, subject to section 4566, subsections 4-A and 4-B, and may serve interrogatories on a respondent to the same extent as interrogatories served in aid of a civil action in the Superior Court. The commission may administer oaths. The complaint and evidence collected during the investigation of the complaint, other than data identifying persons not parties to the complaint, ~~shall become~~is a matter of public record at the conclusion of the investigation of the complaint prior to a determination by the commission. An investigation is concluded upon issuance of a letter of dismissal or upon listing of the complaint on a published commission meeting agenda, whichever first occurs. Prior to the conclusion of an investigation, all information possessed by the commission relating to the

investigation is confidential and may not be disclosed, except that the commission and its employees have discretion to disclose such information as is reasonably necessary to further the investigation. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the complaint and evidence collected during the investigation of the complaint may be used as evidence in any subsequent proceeding, civil or criminal.

Sec. 8.5 MRSA §4612, sub-§3, as amended by PL 1985, c. 585, §2, is further amended to read:

3. Informal methods, conciliation. If the commission finds reasonable grounds to believe that unlawful discrimination has occurred, but finds no emergency of the sort contemplated in subsection 4, paragraph B, it shall endeavor to eliminate such discrimination by informal means such as conference, conciliation and persuasion. ~~Nothing~~Everything said or done as part of such endeavors is confidential and may not be made public disclosed without the written consent of the parties to the proceeding, nor used as evidence in any subsequent proceeding, civil or criminal, except in a civil action alleging a breach of agreement filed by the commission or a party. Notwithstanding this subsection, the commission and its employees have discretion to disclose such information to a party as is reasonably necessary to facilitate conciliation. If the case is disposed of by such informal means in a manner satisfactory to a majority of the commission, it shall dismiss the proceeding.

Sec. 9.5 MRSA §4613, sub-§2, ¶B, as amended by PL 1997, c. 400, §1, is further amended to read:

B. If the court finds that unlawful discrimination occurred, its judgment must specify an appropriate remedy or remedies for that discrimination. The remedies may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) An order to cease and desist from the unlawful practices specified in the order;
- (2) An order to employ or reinstate a victim of unlawful employment discrimination, with or without back pay;
- (3) An order to accept or reinstate such a person in a union;
- (4) An order to rent or sell a specified housing accommodation, or one substantially identical to that accommodation if controlled by the respondent, to a victim of unlawful housing discrimination;
- (5) An order requiring the disclosure of the locations and descriptions of all housing accommodations that the violator has the right to sell, rent, lease or manage; and forbidding the sale, rental or lease of those housing accommodations until the violator has given security to assure~~ensure~~ compliance with any order entered against the violator and with all provisions

of this Act. An order may continue the court's jurisdiction until the violator has demonstrated compliance; and may defer decision on some or all relief until after a probationary period and a further hearing on the violator's conduct during that period;

(6) An order to pay the victim, in cases of unlawful price discrimination, 3 times the amount of any excessive price demanded and paid by reason of that unlawful discrimination;

(7) An order to pay to the victim of unlawful discrimination, other than employment discrimination in the case of a respondent who has more than 14 employees, or, if the commission brings action on behalf of the victim, an order to pay to the victim, the commission or both, civil penal damages not in excess of \$10,000 in the case of the first order under this Act against the respondent, not in excess of \$25,000 in the case of a 2nd order against the respondent arising under the same subchapter of this Act and not in excess of \$50,000 in the case of a 3rd or subsequent order against the respondent arising under the same subchapter of this Act, except that the total amount of civil penal damages awarded in any action filed under this Act may not exceed the limits contained in this subparagraph;

(8) In cases of intentional employment discrimination with respondents who have more than 14 employees, compensatory and punitive damages as provided in this subparagraph.

(a) In an action brought by a complaining party under section 4612 and this section against a respondent who engaged in unlawful intentional discrimination prohibited under sections 4571 to 4575, if the complaining party can not recover under 42 United States Code, Section 1981 (1994), the complaining party may recover compensatory and punitive damages as allowed in this subparagraph in addition to any relief authorized elsewhere in this subsection from the respondent.

(b) When a discriminatory practice involves the provision of a reasonable accommodation, damages may not be awarded under this subparagraph when the covered entity demonstrates good faith efforts, in consultation with the person with the disability who has informed the covered entity that accommodation is needed, to identify and make a reasonable accommodation that would provide that individual with an equally effective opportunity and would not cause an undue hardship on the operation of the business.

(c) A complaining party may recover punitive damages under this subparagraph against a respondent if the complaining party demonstrates that the respondent engaged in a discriminatory practice or discriminatory practices with malice or with reckless indifference to the rights of an aggrieved individual protected by this Act.

(d) Compensatory damages awarded under this subparagraph do not include back pay, interest on back pay or any other type of relief authorized elsewhere under this subsection.

(e) The sum of compensatory damages awarded under this subparagraph for future pecuniary losses, emotional pain, suffering, inconvenience, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment of life, other nonpecuniary losses and the amount of punitive damages awarded under this section may not exceed for each complaining party:

(i) In the case of a respondent who has more than 14 and fewer than 101 employees in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, \$50,000;

(ii) In the case of a respondent who has more than 100 and fewer than 201 employees in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, \$100,000;

(iii) In the case of a respondent who has more than 200 and fewer than 501 employees in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, \$200,000; and

(iv) In the case of a respondent who has more than 500 employees in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, \$300,000.

(f) Nothing in this subparagraph may be construed to limit the scope of, or the relief available under, 42 United States Code, Section 1981 (1994).

(g) If a complaining party seeks compensatory or punitive damages under this subparagraph, any party may demand a trial by jury and the court may not inform the jury of the limitations described in division (e).

(h) This subparagraph does not apply to recoveries for a practice that is unlawful only because of its disparate impact.

(i) Punitive damages may not be included in a judgment or award against a governmental entity, as defined in Title 14, section 8102, subsection 2, or against an employee of a governmental entity based on a claim that arises out of an act or omission occurring within the course or scope of that employee's employment; and

(9) In addition to other remedies in subparagraphs (1) to (8), an order to pay actual damages in the case of discriminatory housing practices. This subparagraph is not intended to limit actual damages available to a plaintiff alleging other discrimination if the remedy of actual damages is otherwise available under this Act.;

SUMMARY

This bill amends the Maine Human Rights Act to correct typographical errors, clarify the protections of the act, make certain Maine Human Rights Commission records confidential and prohibit unreasonable housing practices that have a disparate impact on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, country of ancestral origin, familial status or the receipt of public assistance payments.