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HUD Moves to Gut Fair Housing Act Enforcement

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Trump administration are making efforts to limit [Fair Housing Act](#) enforcement, the landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination in housing, according to reporting in the [New York Times](#).

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the ranking Democrat on the Senate committee responsible for HUD, [sent a letter to the HUD inspector general](#) saying, "The documents obtained by my office allege that HUD leadership informed (the) existing office of fair-housing staff that "fair housing was 'not a priority' of the administration, that less civil rights work would be performed under this administration."

According to the Times, half a dozen current and former employees of HUD's fair housing office said that Trump political appointees had made it nearly impossible for them to do their jobs, which involve investigating and prosecuting landlords, real estate agents, lenders and others who discriminate based on race, religion, gender, family status or disability.

"Several lawyers said they had been blocked from communicating with clients without approval from a Trump appointee, and had been barred from citing some past housing civil rights cases when researching legal precedent for possible new prosecutions," the article says.

HUD staff members said much of the office's fair-housing work is being characterized as an offshoot of D.E.I.

Documents reviewed by The Times show that the work was repeatedly referred to as "not a priority of the administration."

Trump administration officials have drastically reduced Fair Housing Act enforcement at HUD. Settlements dropped from \$4-8 million annually to less than \$200,000, while discrimination charges fell from 35 per year to just 4 since Donald Trump took office. Staff cuts of 65% have reportedly left the fair housing office with only 11 employees, according to the Times reporting.

Kasey Lovett, a spokeswoman for HUD, said in a statement that it was "patently false" to suggest the department was looking to blunt enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, she said, "is using its authority to uphold the law, protect the vulnerable, and ensure meaningful access to housing."

Fair housing cases have historically covered a broad range of civil rights violations.

They have involved landlords refusing to rent to single mothers with children, or people of a certain religion. They have combated discrimination against disabled veterans who needed to live with a service animal. They have targeted real estate agents who did not want to show Black buyers homes in white neighborhoods. And in recent years, they have protected survivors of domestic violence from being denied housing assistance when attempting to escape a stalker or abuser.

Five lawyers have filed a federal lawsuit alleging that they had been "unlawfully targeted by HUD leadership and forced to leave" their roles in the fair-housing office "against their will."

They asked for an injunction ordering HUD to cancel their reassignments.

A spokesman for Senator Elizabeth Warren said the senator [sent a request](#) to Brian Harrison, HUD's acting inspector general, to open an investigation into the office. The allegations, she wrote, "suggest that HUD is no longer enforcing Fair Housing and Civil Rights Laws — with dire consequences."

[Read the full New York Times article here.](#)

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EEOC Sues Apple for Religious Discrimination and Retaliation

Federal suit says Virginia location required long-time employee to work on his Sabbath and later fired him based on his religion

WASHINGTON – Apple, Inc. unlawfully failed to accommodate an employee’s Jewish faith and subsequently fired him because of his religion and in retaliation for complaining of religion-based discrimination, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) alleged in a lawsuit filed today.

The EEOC’s suit said a 16-year employee at the Reston, Virginia Apple Store, who worked as an Apple “genius” consistently received positive performance reviews. However, beginning in August 2023, shortly after he converted to Judaism, he requested an accommodation for observing his Sabbath by not working Fridays and Saturdays. His new store manager rejected the request, claiming Apple’s scheduling policy now prohibited him from having both Friday and Saturday off. Fearing he would lose his job if he did not comply, he worked on the Sabbath, against his religious beliefs.

The EEOC also charged that around this same time, and after requesting his religious reasonable accommodation, Apple began disciplining him for allegedly violating its grooming policies, and shortly after he reminded his supervisor of an upcoming day off for religious reasons, Apple terminated him in January 2024, falsely claiming another violation of its grooming policy.

“Employees should not have to violate their religious beliefs to keep their jobs or live in fear of retribution because they requested an accommodation,” **said EEOC Philadelphia Regional Attorney Debra Lawrence.** “The EEOC is committed to protecting the religious rights of employees in the workplace.”

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from failing to accommodate religious practices, absent an undue hardship, and from discriminating against employees based on their religion. Title VII also prohibits retaliation against an employee for complaining about or opposing discrimination. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Apple, Inc., Civil Action No. 1:25-cv-1637) in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

For more information on religious discrimination, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination>. For more information on retaliation, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation>.

WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMISSION Creed In Employment

Discrimination in employment on the basis of Creed or Religion is a violation of RCW 49.60 and of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is also a violation of the law for an employer to fail to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious belief of an employee.

Resources:

[WSHRC Guide to Religion and Washington State Nondiscrimination Laws](#)

[Chapter 49.60.180 RCW\(link is external\)](#)

[Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)

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