



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of New York*

*271 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, New York 11201*

May 18, 2020

Dear Community Advocates, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations:

In these unprecedented times and as the nation mounts a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are writing to reaffirm our commitment to eradicating sexual harassment in housing in the Eastern District of New York. Sexual harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, and others may violate the federal Fair Housing Act. The Department of Justice, through the United States Attorney's Office, remains unwavering in the enforcement of this vital statute.

As a result of the COVID-19 public health crisis, many in our communities have found themselves out of work, furloughed, or otherwise in dire financial straits. This has led many to seek abatements or suspensions of their rent or seek other accommodations during this time. While many landlords and housing providers have responded by considering or even granting such requests, others have seen an opportunity to exploit the financially vulnerable through demands for sexual favors and other acts of sexual misconduct. This behavior violates the Fair Housing Act and is illegal.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York stands ready to investigate complaints of sexual harassment in housing and to deploy all available enforcement tools against anyone who would violate the Fair Housing Act in this manner. As a community leader, we know that you serve as eyes and ears for these invidious practices. Please contact us if you have any questions or receive any complaints of sexual harassment in housing. Remember: sexual harassment is illegal and fair housing is a right. Individuals should not be forced to submit to sexual harassment in order to stay safe within their home during this global pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please submit any complaints and email any questions to USANYE-CivilRights@usa.doj.gov. You, your organization, and the communities you serve, are in our thoughts during this time.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD P. DONOGHUE
United States Attorney

By:

Michael J. Goldberger
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