



Bucks County Landlords to Pay \$40,000 for Illegally Evicting Mom and Adopted Son

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Swarthmore, PA – The Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia (FHCS) and Robin Link settled federal housing discrimination complaints against Bucks County landlords Charles and Patricia Trucksess for violating the familial status portion of the Fair Housing Act. In April, 2010, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a charge of discrimination on behalf of Robin Link, her adopted minor son, and FHCS against the Trucksesses for illegally terminating the lease of Ms. Link due to the adoption of her son. In addition, HUD alleged that the landlords made discriminatory statements indicating that they did not rent to families with children and that they discouraged other families from applying for available rental units by understating the number of bedrooms.

According to HUD's charge, when Robin Link viewed an apartment in Plumstead Township, PA owned by Charles and Patricia Trucksess in February of 2007 and mentioned that she intended to adopt a child, Ms. Trucksess told her that she had never before rented to a family with children. However, Ms. Trucksess did agree to add a clause in the lease allowing additional tenants, in case Ms. Link did decide to adopt a child. Ms. Link proceeded to move into the apartment and later adopted her son in December, 2008.

In April, 2009, Ms. Link was notified by Ms. Trucksess that they were terminating her lease and that she and her son needed to vacate the apartment by the end of June, 2009. Ms. Link had a lease term that was set to run through February, 2010, and she had not intended to move from the apartment for at least another two years, as she was saving money to purchase a house of her own. Ms. Link asked the Ms. Trucksess if she could remain in the apartment until the end of her lease term, but was told that the eviction was non-negotiable.

Ms. Link contacted FHCS to report the incident and to get information about her fair housing rights. In the meantime, the family was forced to move to a new town, depriving the 11-year old boy of his school, friends, and the aunts that he visited regularly. On November 16, 2009, Ms. Link and FHCS filed a housing discrimination complaint with HUD.

FHCS counseled Ms. Link through the lease termination and through the complaint process, advising her of her rights under the fair housing laws, and investigated her complaint of discrimination. "The impact of discrimination can have devastating long-term effects on the lives of victims, and can cause significant emotional damage to families, especially those with young children," said James Berry, Executive Director of FHCS. "Ms. Link and her son certainly felt the emotional impact of being victims of housing discrimination." Ms. Link said of her experience, "By illegally denying me and my newly adopted son housing, Charles and Patricia Trucksess set into motion a chain of damaging events that will forever change lives and relationships. Their cruel actions caused my son to believe it was his fault that his new mom and he lost their home." She goes on to say, "It is my responsibility as a good mother to protect and teach my son that no one has the right to deny him housing or treat him abusively any longer. I want to thank the staff

at FHCSF and the investigators and legal team at HUD for their support and aid in bringing justice for my beautiful little boy and me.”

Congratulations to Jim Berry of the Fair Housing Center of Suburban Philadelphia in obtaining this settlement.

Charles and Patricia Trucksess have agreed to pay Ms. Link and FHCSF \$40,000 to settle the HUD complaint. The Trucksesses have admitted no wrongdoing, and have agreed to comply with the Fair Housing Act. Additionally, the Trucksesses have agreed to participate in a comprehensive fair housing training, and have agreed to develop a written, non-discriminatory rental policy to be distributed to all current and prospective tenants. “Adoptive families deserve the same respect and enjoy the same rights as all families in our society,” stated John Trasviña, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity. “HUD works vigorously to enforce legal protection for families with children.”

The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of familial status, or the presence of children under the age of 18 in the household. In addition, expectant mothers and any adult who is in the process of gaining legal custody of a child are covered under the familial status provision of the Fair Housing Act. Familial status has been protected under the Fair Housing Act since 1988.

The Fair Housing Act protects people from discrimination in housing related transactions based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. Anyone suspecting that they were denied housing for discriminatory reasons, or any housing providers who want information on how they can operate their business in a nondiscriminatory manner should contact FHCSF at 610-604-4411 or visit www.fhcsp.com.

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