

CHAPTER 21
Fair Housing Law

SECTION 31-21-10. Short title.

This chapter is known and may be cited as the South Carolina Fair Housing Law.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-20. State policy.

It is the policy of this State to provide, within constitutional limitations, for fair housing throughout the State.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-30. Definitions.

For purposes of this chapter:

- (1) "Commission" means the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission.
- (2) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission.
- (3) "Covered multi-family dwellings" means:
 - (a) buildings consisting of four or more units if the buildings have one or more elevators; and
 - (b) ground floor units in other buildings consisting of four or more units.
- (4) "Discriminatory housing practice" means an act that is unlawful under this chapter.
- (5) "Dwelling" means any building or structure, or portion of any building or structure, which is occupied as, or designed or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land which is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location on it of any such building or structure, or portion of it.
 - (6)(a) "Familial status" means one or more individuals who have not attained the age of eighteen years and are domiciled with:
 - (i) a parent or another person having legal custody of the individual; or
 - (ii) the designee of the parent or other person having the custody, with the written permission of the parent or other person.
 - (b) The protections afforded against discrimination on the basis of familial status apply to any person who is pregnant or is in the process of securing legal custody of any individual who has not attained the age of eighteen years.
- (7) "Handicap" means, with respect to a person:
 - (a) a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities;
 - (b) a record of having such an impairment; or
 - (c) being regarded as having an impairment.The term "handicap" excludes current, illegal use of or addiction to a controlled substance as defined by law.
- (8) "Housing for older persons" means housing:
 - (a) provided under any state or federal program that the commissioner determines is designed specifically and operated to assist elderly persons, as defined in the state or federal program; or
 - (b) intended for, and solely occupied by persons sixty-two years of age or older; or
 - (c) intended and operated for occupancy by at least one person fifty-five years of age or older for each unit. In determining whether housing qualifies as housing intended and operated for occupancy by at least one person fifty-five years of age or older, the commissioner shall develop regulations which require at least the following factors:

(i) the existence of significant facilities and services specifically designed to meet the physical or social needs of older persons or, if the provision of the facilities and services is not practicable, that the housing is necessary to provide important housing opportunities for older persons; and

(ii) that at least eighty percent of the dwellings are occupied by at least one person fifty-five years of age or older for each unit; and

(iii) the publication of and adherence to policies and procedures which demonstrate an intent by the owner or manager to provide housing for persons fifty-five years of age or older.

(d) that does not fail to meet the requirements for housing for older persons by reason of:

(i) persons residing in this housing as of the date of enactment of this chapter who do not meet the requirements of subitem (b) or (c); or

(ii) unoccupied units, provided that these units are reserved for occupancy by persons who meet the new requirements of subitem (b) or (c).

(9) "Person" includes one or more individuals, corporations, partnerships, associations, labor organizations, legal representatives, mutual companies, joint-stock companies, trusts, unincorporated organizations, trustees, trustees in bankruptcy, receivers, and fiduciaries.

(10) "To rent" includes to lease, to sublease, to let, and otherwise to grant for a consideration the right to occupy premises not owned by the occupant.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-40. Discrimination in relation to sale or rental of property.

It is unlawful:

(1) to refuse to sell or rent after the making of a bona fide offer, to refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise to make unavailable or deny a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or national origin;

(2) to discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with it, because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or national origin;

(3) to make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published, any notice, statement, or advertisement with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin or an intention to make the preference, limitation, or discrimination;

(4) to represent to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin that any dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when the dwelling is available;

(5) for profit, to induce or attempt to induce any person to sell or rent any dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin;

(6) to discriminate in the sale or rental, or to otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling to any buyer or renter because of a handicap of:

(a) that buyer or renter;

(b) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it is sold, rented, or made available; or

(c) any person associated with that buyer or renter;

(7) to discriminate against a person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with the dwelling, because of a handicap of:

(a) that person;

(b) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it is sold, rented, or made available; or

(c) any person associated with that person.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-50. Discrimination in relation to membership or participation in multiple listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or related service, organization, or facility.

It is unlawful to deny any person access to, or membership or participation in, any multiple-listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or other service, organization, or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings or to discriminate against him in the terms or conditions of the access, membership, or participation on account of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-60. Discrimination in relation to residential real estate-related transactions.

(A) It is unlawful for any person or other entity whose business includes engaging in residential real estate-related transactions to discriminate against any person in making available such a transaction, or in the terms or conditions of the transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.

(B) As used in this section, "residential real estate-related transaction" means any of the following:

- (1) the making or purchasing of loans or providing other financial assistance:
 - (a) for purchasing, constructing, improving, repairing, or maintaining a dwelling; or
 - (b) secured by residential real estate;
- (2) the selling, brokering, or appraising of residential real property.

(C) Nothing in this chapter prohibits a person engaged in the business of furnishing appraisals of real property to take into consideration factors other than race, color, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, or familial status.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-70. Application and exceptions.

(A) Nothing in Section 31-21-40 or 31-21-60 applies to rooms or units in dwellings containing living quarters occupied or intended to be occupied by no more than four families living independently of each other, if the owner actually maintains and occupies one of the living quarters as his residence.

(B) Nothing in Section 31-21-40 or 31-21-60 applies to any single-family house sold or rented by an owner when:

- (1) the private individual owner does not own more than three single-family houses at any one time; and
- (2) in the sale of any single-family house by a private individual owner not residing in the house at the time of the sale or who was not the most recent resident of the house before the sale, the exemption granted by this subsection applies only with respect to one sale within a twenty-four month period; and
- (3) a bona fide private individual owner does not own an interest in, nor is there owned or reserved on his behalf, under any express or voluntary agreement, title to or a right to all or a portion of the proceeds from the sale or rental of more than three single-family houses at any one time.

After the effective date of this chapter, the sale or rental of a single-family house is excepted from the application of this subsection only if the house is sold or rented:

(a) without the use in any manner of the sales or rental facilities or the sales or rental services of a real estate broker, agent, or salesman, or of the facilities or services of a person in the business of selling or renting dwellings, or of an employee or agent of a broker, agent, salesman, or person; and

(b) without publication posting or mailing, after notice, of an advertisement or written notice in violation of this chapter. Nothing in this subsection prohibits the use of attorneys, escrow agents,

abstractors, title companies, and other professional assistance as necessary to perfect or transfer this title.

(C) For the purposes of this section, a person is considered to be in the business of selling or renting dwellings if he:

(1) has, within the preceding twelve months, participated as principal in three or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling or any interest in it;

(2) has, within the preceding twelve months, participated as agent, other than in the sale of his personal residence, in providing sales or rental facilities or sales or rental services in two or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling or any interest in it; or

(3) is the owner of any dwelling designed or intended for occupancy by, or occupied by, five or more families.

(D) Nothing in this chapter prohibits a religious organization, association, or society, or any nonprofit institution or organization operated, supervised, or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association, or society, from limiting the sale, rental, or occupancy of any dwelling which it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose to persons of the same religion or from giving preference to those persons, unless membership in the religion is restricted because of race, color, or national origin. Nothing in this chapter prohibits a private club not in fact open to the public, which as an incident to its primary purpose provides lodgings which it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose, from limiting the rental or occupancy of the lodgings to its members or from giving preference to its members.

(E) It is not unlawful under Section 31-21-40(1) or (2) for any person to deny or limit the rental of housing to persons who pose a real and present threat of substantial harm to themselves, to others, or to the housing itself.

(F) Nothing in this chapter prohibits conduct against a person because the person has been convicted by any court of competent jurisdiction of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance as defined by law.

(G) For purposes of Section 31-21-40(6), discrimination includes:

(1) a refusal to permit, at the expense of the handicapped person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by the person if the modifications are necessary to afford that person full enjoyment of the premises, except that in the case of a rental, the landlord, where it is reasonable to do so, may condition permission for a modification on the renter agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted;

(2) a refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford the person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; or

(3) in connection with the design and construction of covered multi-family dwellings for first occupancy after the date that is thirty months after the date of enactment of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, a failure to design and construct those dwellings in such a manner that:

(a) the public use and common use portions of such dwelling are readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons;

(b) all the doors designed to allow passage into and within all premises within such dwellings are sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs; and

(c) all premises within these dwellings contain the following features of adaptive design:

(i) an accessible route into and through the dwelling;

(ii) light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations;

(iii) reinforcements in the bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars; and

(iv) usable kitchens and bathrooms that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space.

(H) Compliance with the appropriate requirements of the American National Standard for Buildings and Facilities Providing Accessibility and Usability for Physically Handicapped People (commonly cited as “ANSI A117.1”) suffices to satisfy the requirements of Section 31-21-70(G)(3)(c).

(1)(a) If a unit of local government has incorporated into its laws the requirements in (G)(3) of this section, compliance with these laws is considered to satisfy the requirements of that section.

(b) A unit of local government may review and approve newly constructed covered multi-family dwellings for the purpose of making determinations as to whether the design and construction requirements of (G)(3) of this section are met.

(c) The commission shall encourage, but may not require, units of local government to include in their existing procedures for the review and approval of newly constructed covered multi-family dwellings, determinations as to whether the design and construction of these dwellings are consistent with (G)(3) of this section, and shall provide technical assistance to units of local government and other persons to implement the requirements of (G)(3) of this section.

(d) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to require the commission to review or approve the plans, designs, or construction of all covered multi-family dwellings, to determine whether the design and construction of these dwellings are consistent with the requirements of (G)(3) of this section.

(I)(1) Nothing in subsection (H) may be construed to affect the authority and responsibility of the commissioner to receive and process complaints or otherwise engage in enforcement activities under this chapter.

(2) Determinations by the unit of local government under subsection (H)(1)(a) or (b) are not conclusive in enforcement proceedings under this chapter.

(J) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to invalidate or limit any law of a political subdivision of the State that requires dwellings to be designed and constructed in a manner that affords handicapped persons greater access than is required by this chapter.

(K) Nothing in this chapter requires that a dwelling be made available to an individual whose occupancy would constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals or whose occupancy would result in substantial physical damage to the property of others.

(L) Nothing in this chapter limits the applicability of any reasonable local, state, or federal restrictions regarding the maximum number of occupants permitted to occupy a dwelling. Owners and managers of dwellings may develop and implement reasonable occupancy and safety standards based on factors such as the number and size of sleeping areas or bedrooms and the overall size of a dwelling unit so long as the standards do not violate local, state, or federal restrictions. No provision in this chapter regarding familial status applies to housing for older persons. Nothing in this chapter prohibits the lease application or similar document from requiring information concerning the number, ages, sex, and familial relationship of the applicants and the dwelling’s intended occupants. The owner or manager may consider these factors in determining payment of utilities. The application also may require disclosure by the applicant of the conviction of any intended occupant for violating any laws pertaining to the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance as defined by law.

(M) The provisions of Section 31-21-40 with respect to discrimination based on sex do not apply to the rental or leasing of dwellings in a single-sex dormitory property.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-80. Interference with the exercise of any right under this chapter.

It is unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise of, or on account of his having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise of, any right granted under this chapter.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-90. Administration of chapter.

(A) The commission shall administer the provisions of this chapter.

(B) The commission may delegate any of its functions, duties, and powers to its employees including functions, duties, and powers with respect to investigating, conciliating, hearing, determining, ordering, certifying, reporting, or otherwise acting as to any work, business, or matter under this chapter.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-100. Powers of commission.

The commission has the power to:

(1) promulgate regulations necessary for the enforcement of this chapter which may not exceed the requirements of the 1988 Fair Housing Amendments Act (PL 100-430) and any subsequent amendments to it;

(2) make studies with respect to the nature and extent of discriminatory housing practices in representative urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the State;

(3) publish and disseminate reports, recommendations, and information derived from the studies;

(4) cooperate with and render technical assistance to public or private agencies, organizations, and institutions within the State which are formulating or carrying on programs to prevent or eliminate discriminatory housing practices;

(5) cooperate with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to achieve the purposes of that department and with other federal, state, and local agencies and departments;

(6) accept reimbursement pursuant to Title 42, United States Code, Section 3616 for services rendered to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development;

(7) accept gifts or bequests, grants, or other donations, public or private;

(8) institute proceedings in a court of competent jurisdiction, for cause shown, to seek appropriate temporary or preliminary injunctive relief pending final administrative disposition of a complaint;

(9) contract with persons and organizations to perform services as it may consider reasonably necessary to effectuate the purposes of this chapter and to accept reimbursement for services rendered pursuant to the contract. However, the commission may not delegate its decision-making authority to a nongovernmental agency. This decision-making authority includes acceptance of complaints, approval of conciliation agreements, dismissal of complaints, final disposition of complaints, or other enforcement powers granted by this chapter;

(10) make contractual agreements within the scope and authority of this chapter with any agency of the federal government. An agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development may include provisions under which the department shall refrain from processing a charge in this State in any class specified in the agreement;

(11) administer the programs and activities relating to housing in a manner affirmatively to further the policies of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1; 1990 Act No. 445, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-110. Investigations by commission; subpoenas.

(A) In conducting an investigation, the commission shall 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 the materials and take and record the testimony or statements of persons as are reasonably necessary for the furtherance of the investigation, provided the commission first complies with the provisions of the State Constitution relating to unreasonable searches and seizures. The commission may issue subpoenas to compel its access to or the production of the materials or the appearance of the persons and may issue interrogatories to a respondent, to the same extent and subject to the same limitations as would apply if the subpoenas or interrogatories were issued or served in aid of a civil action in court. The commission may administer oaths. Any examination, recording, copying of materials, and the taking and recording of testimony or statements of persons as reasonably are

necessary for the furtherance of the investigation must be solely related to the complaint for which the subpoena was issued.

(B) Upon written application to the commission, a respondent is entitled to the issuance of a reasonable number of subpoenas by and in the name of the commission to the same extent and subject to the same limitations as subpoenas issued by the commission itself. A subpoena issued at the request of a respondent shall show on its face the name and address of the respondent and shall state that it was issued at his request.

(C) Within five days after service of a subpoena upon any person, the person may petition the commission to revoke or modify the subpoena. The commission shall grant the petition if it finds that the subpoena requires appearance or attendance at an unreasonable time or place, that it requires production of evidence which does not relate to any matter under investigation, that it does not describe with sufficient particularity the evidence to be produced, or that compliance would be unduly onerous or for other good reason.

(D) In case of refusal to obey a subpoena, the commission or the person at whose request the subpoena was issued may petition for its enforcement in the circuit court for the county in which the person to whom the subpoena was addressed resides, was served, or transacts business.

(E) Witnesses summoned by a subpoena under this chapter are entitled to the same witness and mileage fees as witnesses in proceedings in court. Fees payable to a witness summoned by a subpoena issued at the request of a party must be paid by that party or, where a party is unable to pay the fees, by the commission.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.

SECTION 31-21-120. Complaints; process and handling; conciliation; effect of local laws; civil action.

(A) A person who claims to have been injured by a discriminatory housing practice or who believes that he may be injured by a discriminatory housing practice that is about to occur may file a complaint with the commission. Complaints must be in writing and shall contain information and be in a form required by the commission. Upon receipt of a complaint, the commission shall serve notice upon the aggrieved person of the time limits and choices of forums provided under this chapter and shall furnish a copy to the person who allegedly committed the discriminatory housing practice or is about to commit the alleged discriminatory housing practice and advise him of the procedural rights and obligations under the law. Within thirty days after receiving a complaint, or within thirty days after the expiration of any period of reference under subsection (C), the commission shall investigate the complaint and give notice in writing to the person aggrieved whether it intends to resolve it. If the commission decides to resolve the complaint, it shall proceed to try to eliminate or correct the alleged discriminatory housing practice by informal methods of conference, conciliation, and persuasion. If practicable, conciliation meetings must be held in the cities or other localities where the discriminatory housing practices allegedly occurred. Nothing said or done in the course of the informal endeavors may be made public or used as evidence in a subsequent proceeding under this chapter without the written consent of the persons concerned. An employee of the commission who makes public any information in violation of this provision is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars or imprisoned for not more than thirty days.

(B) A complaint under subsection (A) must be filed within one hundred eighty days after the alleged discriminatory housing practice occurred. The complaint must be in writing and shall state the facts upon which the allegations of a discriminatory housing practice are based. A complaint may be reasonably and fairly amended at any time. A respondent may file an answer to the complaint against him, not later than ten days after receipt of notice, and may be amended reasonably and fairly by the respondent at any time. Both complaint and answer must be verified.

(C) Wherever a local fair housing law provides rights and remedies for alleged discriminatory housing practices which substantially are equivalent to the rights and remedies provided in this chapter, the commission shall notify the appropriate local agency of any complaint filed under this chapter which

appears to constitute a violation of the local fair housing law, and the commission shall take no further action with respect to the complaint if the local law enforcement official, within thirty days from the date the alleged offense was brought to his attention, has commenced proceedings in the matter. In no event may the commission take further action unless it certifies that in its judgment, under the circumstances of the particular case, the protection of the rights of the parties or the interests of justice require the action.

Complaints referred to the commission by the Department of Housing and Urban Development may not be referred by the commission to a local agency.

(D) Any conciliation agreement arising out of conciliation efforts by the commission must be an agreement between the respondent and the complainant and is subject to the approval of the commission. Each conciliation agreement must be made public unless the complainant and respondent otherwise agree and the commission determines that disclosure is not required to further the purposes of this chapter.

(E) The investigation must be completed in no more than one hundred days after receipt of the complaint. If the commission is unable to complete the investigation within one hundred days, it shall notify the complainant and respondent in writing of the reasons for not doing so.

(F) The commission shall make final administrative disposition of a complaint within one year of the date of receipt of a complaint unless it is impractical to do so. If the commission is unable to do so, it shall notify the complainant and respondent, in writing, of the reasons for not doing so.

(G) In any proceeding brought pursuant to this section, the burden of proof is on the complainant.

(H) Whenever an action filed by an individual in court pursuant to this section or Section 31-21-140 comes to trial, the commission shall terminate all efforts to obtain voluntary compliance.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1; 1990 Act No. 445, Section 2.

SECTION 31-21-130. Investigator's report and recommendation; dismissal of or hearing on complaint; civil action; amending of complaint; subpoenas; hearing by commission; opinion and order; review; court appeals; enforcement orders.

(A) If not sooner resolved, the investigator, upon completion of his investigation, shall submit to the commissioner a statement of the facts disclosed by his investigation and recommend either that the complaint be dismissed or that a panel of commission members be designated to hear the complaint. The commissioner, after review of the case file and the statement and recommendation of the investigator, shall issue an order either of dismissal or for a hearing, which is not subject to judicial or other further review.

(B) If the order is for dismissal, the commissioner shall mail a copy of the order to the complainant and the respondent at their last known addresses. The complainant may bring an action against the respondent in circuit court within ninety days of the date of the dismissal or within one year from the date of the violation alleged, whichever occurs later, to enforce the rights granted or protected by this chapter and to seek relief as provided for in Section 31-21-140.

(C)(1) If the order is for a hearing, the commissioner shall attach to it a notice and a copy of the complaint and require the respondent to answer the complaint at a hearing at a time and place specified in the notice and shall serve upon the respondent a copy of the order, the complaint, and the notice.

(2) Either party may elect to have the claims asserted in the complaint decided in a civil action. The commissioner's notice must be sent to all parties and inform them of their right to take civil action. An election must be made within twenty days after receipt of the notice. A party making this election shall notify the commissioner and all other parties.

If an election is made for a civil action, the commissioner shall, within thirty days from the date of election, commence and maintain a civil action pursuant to Section 31-21-140 on behalf of the aggrieved person.

(D) At any time before a hearing, a complaint may be amended by the commissioner upon the request of the investigator or of the complainant or of the respondent. Complaints may be amended during a hearing only upon a majority vote of the panel of commission members for the hearing.

(E) Upon request by any party, the commissioner shall issue appropriate subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum to any witnesses or other custodians of documents desired to be present at the hearing, or at prehearing depositions, unless the commissioner determines that issuance of the subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum would be unreasonable or unduly burdensome.

(F) Upon notification by any party that any party or witness has failed to permit access, failed to comply with a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum, refused to have his deposition taken, refused to answer interrogatories, or otherwise refused to allow discovery, the commission, upon notice to the party or witness, shall apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order requiring discovery and other good-faith compliance unless the commission determines that the discovery would be unreasonably or unduly burdensome.

(G) Upon request by the commissioner, the chairman of the commission shall designate a panel of three members of the commission to sit as the commission to hear the complaint.

(H) At any hearing held pursuant to this section, the case in support of the complaint must be presented before the panel by one or more of the commission's employees or agents or by legal representatives of the complaining party. Endeavors at conciliation by the investigator may not be received into evidence nor otherwise made known to the members of the panel.

(I) The respondent shall submit a written answer to the complaint and appear at the hearing in person or by counsel and may submit evidence. The respondent may amend his answer reasonably and fairly.

(J) The complainant must be permitted to be present and submit evidence.

(K) Proceedings under this section are subject to the provisions of Chapter 23 of Title 1 (Administrative Procedures Act) and, in the case of conflict between the provisions of this chapter and Chapter 23 of Title 1, the provisions of Chapter 23 of Title 1 shall govern. A recording of the proceedings must be made, which may be transcribed subsequently upon request and payment of a reasonable fee by the complainant or the respondent. The fee must be set by the commission or upon motion of the panel, in which case copies of the transcription must be made available to the complainant or the respondent upon request and payment of a reasonable fee to be set by the commission.

(L) If, upon all the evidence at the hearing, the panel shall find that the respondent has engaged in any unlawful discriminatory practice, it shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the complainant and the respondent in the name of the commission an opinion and order for appropriate relief which may include that the unlawful discriminatory practice be discontinued, actual damages, civil penalties which may not be greater than civil penalties established by the federal Fair Housing Act in Section 3612, and reasonable attorney's fees. The commission may retain jurisdiction of the case until it is satisfied of compliance by the respondent of its order.

(M) If, upon all the evidence at the hearing, the panel finds that the respondent has not engaged in any unlawful discriminatory practice, the panel shall state its findings of fact and serve upon the complainant and the respondent an opinion and order dismissing the complaint as to the respondent. A prevailing respondent may apply to the commission for an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

(N) A copy of the opinion and order of the commission must be delivered in all cases to the Attorney General and to such other public officers as the commission considers proper. Copies of the opinion and order must be available to the public for inspection upon request, and copies must be made available to any person upon payment of a reasonable fee set by the commission.

(O)(1) If an application for review is made to the commission within fourteen days from the date of the order of the commission, the commission, for good cause shown, shall review the order and evidence, receive further evidence, rehear the parties or their representatives, and, if proper, amend the order.

(2) The order of the commission, as provided in subsection (L), if not reviewed in due time, or an order of the commission upon the review, as provided for in item (1), is conclusive and binding as to

all questions of fact unless clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantive evidence in the whole record. Either party to the dispute, within thirty days after receipt of notice to be sent by registered mail of the order, but not after that time, may appeal from the decision of the commission to the Administrative Law Court as provided in Sections 1-23-380(B) and 1-23-600(D). In case of an appeal from the decision of the commission, the appeal operates as a supersedeas for thirty days only, unless otherwise ordered by the administrative law judge, and after that the respondent is required to comply with the order involved in the appeal or certification until the questions at issue in it are determined fully in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(3) The commission may institute a proceeding for enforcement of its order of subsection (L), or its amended order of item (1) after thirty days from the date of the order, by filing a petition in the court of common pleas of the county in which the hearing occurred, or where a person against whom the order is entered resides or transacts business.

(4) If no appeal pursuant to item (2) is initiated, the commission may obtain a decree of the court for enforcement of its order upon a showing that a copy of the petition for enforcement was served upon the party subject to the dictates of the commission's order.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1; 1990 Act No. 445, Sections 3-5; 2006 Act No. 387, Section 16, eff July 1, 2006.

Editor's Note

2006 Act No. 387, Section 53, provides as follows:

"This act is intended to provide a uniform procedure for contested cases and appeals from administrative agencies and to the extent that a provision of this act conflicts with an existing statute or regulation, the provisions of this act are controlling."

2006 Act No. 387, Section 57, provides as follows:

"This act takes effect on July 1, 2006, and applies to any actions pending on or after the effective date of the act. No pending or vested right, civil action, special proceeding, or appeal of a final administrative decision exists under the former law as of the effective date of this act, except for appeals of Department of Health and Environmental Control Ocean and Coastal Resource Management and Environmental Quality Control permits that are before the Administrative Law Court on the effective date of this act and petitions for judicial review that are pending before the circuit court. For those actions only, the department shall hear appeals from the administrative law judges and the circuit court shall hear pending petitions for judicial review in accordance with the former law. Thereafter, any appeal of those actions shall proceed as provided in this act for review. For all other actions pending on the effective date of this act, the action proceeds as provided in this act for review."

Effect of Amendment

The 2006 amendment, in subsection (O), in subparagraph (2) in the second sentence substituted "Administrative Law Court as provided in Sections 1-23-380(B) and 1-23-600(D)" for "court of common pleas of the county in which the hearing occurred, or in which the respondent resides or has his principal office", and in the third sentence substituted "administrative law judge" for "court"; and made nonsubstantive changes throughout.

SECTION 31-21-140. Civil action; damages.

(A) A civil action must be commenced within one year after the alleged discriminatory housing practice has occurred. However, the court shall continue a civil case brought pursuant to this section from time to time before bringing it to trial if the court believes that the conciliation efforts of the commission or local agency are likely to result in satisfactory settlement of the discriminatory housing practice complained of in the complaint made to the commission or to the local agency and which practice forms the basis for the action in court. Any sale, encumbrance, or rental consummated before the issuance of any court order issued under the authority of this chapter and involving a bona fide purchaser, encumbrances, or tenant without actual notice of the existence of the filing of a complaint

or civil action under the provisions of this chapter are not affected. A civil action may be commenced by an aggrieved person whether or not a complaint has been filed with the commission.

(B) The court may grant as relief, as it considers appropriate, any permanent or temporary injunction, temporary restraining order, or other order and may award the plaintiff actual damages, and punitive damages, together with court costs and reasonable attorney's fees in the case of a prevailing party, if the prevailing party in the opinion of the court is not financially able to assume the attorney's fees.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1; 1990 Act No. 445, Section 6.

SECTION 31-21-150. Coordination regarding complaint filed with multiple agencies.

Before accepting any complaint under this chapter, the commission shall determine if the complainant has filed a similar complaint with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation of the Federal Reserve System, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, or any other agency with authority to investigate and resolve complaints alleging a violation of this chapter. If a complaint has been filed or is filed, subsequently the commission shall coordinate efforts to resolve the complaint with that agency in order to avoid multiple investigations of the respondent.

HISTORY: 1989 Act No. 72, Section 1.