

PRESS RELEASE --FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OVERLY RESTRICTIVE LANSDALE HOUSING ORDINANCE CHANGED

Montgomery County, December 16, 2003. The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County is pleased to announce that on December 3, 2003 Lansdale Borough Council amended its housing ordinance to repeal a discriminatory overcrowding ordinance that was in violation of federal and state Fair Housing laws.

The legislative action was initiated by a complaint lodged with the Borough by the Fair Housing Council in January 2003 on behalf of a family of four renting a two bedroom apartment in Lansdale whose landlord had been notified by the Borough's Code Enforcement Officer that he was in violation of the Borough's overcrowding ordinance. The violation pertained to the occupant's two opposite sex children sharing a bedroom. The landlord was ordered to rectify the situation or lose his rental license and face a fine. When the landlord moved to evict the family they contacted the Council for assistance

Prior to its revision, the Borough's overcrowding ordinance stated that opposite sex children over the age of five could not share a bedroom and also prohibited a family with two adults and one child over the age of eight years from sharing a one bedroom apartment. The Council notified the Borough that the ordinance was in violation of the Fair Housing Act and requested that it be repealed immediately. Occupancy limits to prevent overcrowding should be based upon reasonable factors such as square footage requirements and not on the gender and sex of children in a household.

Upon notice by the Council, the Borough and it's Solicitor immediately began working on amending the ordinance and implementing a non- discriminatory policy. On December 3, 2003 the Borough Council adopted the 2003 International Property Maintenance Code which bases occupancy limits upon the square footage in a unit. The Council will provide fair housing information to landlords who operate in the Borough of Lansdale through its existing annual licensing process.

"The repeal of a discriminatory housing ordinance is a great success by the Council in protecting families from gender discrimination in rental housing. We are happy that this could be resolved positively", said Elizabeth Albert, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County.