

## **BEWARE OF “PREDATORY” LANDLORDS**

### **FAIR HOUSING HIGHLIGHT #25**

#### **What’s a “Predatory Landlord”?**

Predatory landlords are those who take advantage of vulnerable people i.e. those unfamiliar with their legal rights, new immigrants, students, new/unsophisticated renters, or just folks who are poor and afraid of losing their housing. They don’t play fair with tenants.

#### **What kinds of unfair things do they do?**

- Neglecting to make necessary repairs which impact the tenant’s use of the property such as no heat in the winter; doors that don’t lock; vermin infestation; lack of running water; unsafe structural elements i.e. roof, floors, stairs, porches; and serious code violations which make it dangerous to occupy the property. These conditions would indicate that the premises are not fit for human habitation.
- Writing leases which attempt to take away the landlord’s responsibility to make sure that the premises ARE fit for human habitation, called the “warranty of habitability”. Telling tenants that they must accept the premises “as is”. ***A landlord may NOT legally rent a property which is not habitable or has serious code violations.***
- Threatening to report tenants to immigration authorities if they complain about unsafe conditions or things that need to be repaired.
- Charging tenants excessive fees for things that are not their responsibility. For example: charging a tenant who has only caused normal wear & tear to the property for extensive renovations after they move out.
- Refusing to give a tenant a copy of the lease. Not giving receipts for payments.
- Never returning security deposits— no matter what the tenant does.

#### **How can I protect myself?**

First—Think Ahead! Check out the landlord—talk to other tenants who live there if possible. Read your lease carefully before signing. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. Keep a copy of your lease. Get proper receipts for payments. All promises should be in writing. Call Code Enforcement and the Health Department to report unsafe conditions or uninhabitable units. Find out the correct name and address of the landlord/owner/manager. Read the small print AGAIN before you move out—so as to give required notice and get your security deposit returned. AND BE A GOOD TENANT!

**Questions? Call the Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania at 215 576-7711 or visit us online at [www.fairhousingrights.org](http://www.fairhousingrights.org).**