



Pinellas County

Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Proposed initiation of litigation in the case of Jeannie Vargas v. Jeffery Sojack; HUD Case No. 04-19-8272-8; PC Case No. 19-067 - alleged housing discrimination.

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Determination - Vargas v Sojack, 2. Final Investigative Report - Vargas v Sojack

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/25/2020	1	Board of County Commissioners	approved	Pass

Subject:

Proposed initiation of litigation in the case of Jeannie Vargas v. Jeffery Sojack; HUD Case No. 04-19-8272-8; PC Case No. 19-067 - alleged housing discrimination.

Recommended Action:

Approval and authorization for the County Attorney to initiate litigation on behalf of Jeannie Vargas through outside counsel retained for these legal services.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Summary:

On August 14, 2019, Complainant Jeannie Vargas filed a charge of housing discrimination with the Pinellas County Office of Human Rights (PCOHR) alleging Complainant was subjected to unlawful housing discrimination, specifically failure to make reasonable accommodation and discriminatory refusal to rent and negotiate for rental on the basis disability. An Amended Complaint was later filed on October 21, 2019, adding handicap and retaliation; specifically, Respondent’s failure to make reasonable accommodation and the denial of Complainant’s request to have an additional day to move out of the rental property. Following that investigation, on November 13, 2019, PCOHR issued a finding of reasonable cause to believe that Jeannie Vargas was a victim of housing discrimination based on retaliation only as it related to her move out date due to Respondent’s refusal to grant her an additional day to move out of Respondent’s rental property due to Complainant filing a housing complaint against him, which is a protected activity, in violation of Chapter 70 of the Pinellas County Code and the FHAA, including, but not limited to, Section 818(c)(5). Attempts to conciliate the matter were unsuccessful.

In accordance with Section 70-146 and 70-147 of the Pinellas County Code, the County Attorney’s Office is required to file a civil action on behalf of an aggrieved party seeking appropriate relief, and if a timely election is not made to have the charge decided in a civil action.

Background Information:

The Determination issued by the PCOHR setting forth the facts and applicable law that led to the reasonable cause determination is attached, as is the Final Investigative Report.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Jewel White, County Attorney
Diriki T. Geuka, Assistant County Attorney

Partners:

Office of Human Rights

Attachments:

Determination dated November 13, 2019.
Final Investigative Report dated November 13, 2019.