



HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS *H-GAC Reminds Area Residents to Stay Informed of Their Fair Housing Rights*

HOUSTON, TX – The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) recognizes April as Fair Housing Month and reminds homebuyers and renters to be aware of their rights under the Fair Housing Act.

The Fair Housing Act was signed into law more than 50 years ago by President Lyndon Johnson as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of that law) prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status. The act applies to rental properties, properties for sale, and mortgage lending.

Under the Fair Housing Act, real estate advertisements may not exclude any groups covered under the law. Sellers and landlords must make homes available, negotiate prices, and provide the same services for everyone protected under the Fair Housing Act. People must also be allowed to exercise their right to fair housing without fear of threats, coercion, or intimidation.

“Even as we’re dealing with the outbreak of COVID-19, homes are still being bought and sold,” H-GAC’s director of community and environmental planning, Jeff Taebel said.

“People are still looking for apartments. Issues surrounding the virus should not be the basis for unlawful discrimination. It’s important that homebuyers and renters are aware of what their rights are to fair housing,” Taebel added.

Recent layoffs and furloughs in the wake of COVID-19 have left many in the region struggling to pay their rent or mortgage. In response, the Federal Housing Finance Agency has directed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to suspend foreclosures and evictions for at least 60 days. Mortgage payments may be suspended for up to a year for borrowers impacted by COVID-19 with federally backed mortgages. The national emergency declaration included a foreclosure and eviction moratorium for all USDA Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans Program loans for a period of 60 days.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created a special resources page on housing regulations and guidelines in the midst of COVID-19 at [hud.gov/coronavirus](https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus). More information about the Fair Housing Act can be found at [hud.gov/fairhousing](https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).

Those who feel their rights have been violated should file a complaint with HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity by calling 1-800-669-9777 or 1-800-877-8339 for TTY. They can also submit a complaint form by email or online via the HUD website.

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H-GAC is a voluntary association of local governments and local elected officials from the 13-county Gulf Coast planning region, which includes an area of 12,500 square miles and more than 7 million people. H-GAC works to promote efficient and accountable use of local, state, and federal tax dollars; serves as a problem-solving and information forum for local governments; and helps analyze trends and conditions affecting the region. For more information, visit [h-gac.com](https://www.h-gac.com).