



As we look forward to a new year, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on all that we accomplished during 2021. It was a challenging year. We saw the need for our services reach new heights, with our complaint intakes increasing by 160% over last year. These numbers reflect a gridlocked rental housing market and ongoing systemic housing discrimination against those in the greatest need, recipients of housing assistance, low-income families with children under six, and survivors of domestic violence. However, despite all of the challenges, we continued making substantial progress in our efforts to overcome systemic housing discrimination in Massachusetts.



Mass Fair Housing's Top Ten

Accomplishments of 2021

1 - Victory in Federal District Court. On September 29, 2021, Federal District Court Judge, Mark G. Mastroianni, issued an [opinion](#), denying the defendants' motion to dismiss our civil rights complaint against state officials, who enforce the discriminatory terms of the Massachusetts Lead Law. This ruling will allow our case to proceed to trial. See our [press release](#).

2 - MFHC supports a bill filed in the Massachusetts State House to fix the broken Massachusetts Lead Law. The proposed amendments, filed in February, 2021, [SD2347/HD3659](#), are sponsored by Senator James Eldridge (D-Action) and Representative David LeBeouf (D-Worcester). See our [press release](#).

3 - The Editorial Board of the Boston Herald Board published an [editorial](#) in favor of the proposed amendments to the Lead Bill. After the Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Health held a public hearing on the proposed amendments on June 22, 2021, the Boston Herald published an editorial supporting the amendments and urging the legislature to "green light" the legislation.

4 - MFHC stepped up its enforcement activity to prevent housing discrimination and create lead-safe housing for children. In

2021, MFHC conducted a special systemic testing investigation to identify landlords who discriminate against families with children in neighborhoods

with high rates of childhood lead poisoning. This strategy increases our ability to end housing discrimination and childhood lead poisoning. In one of our cases, we reached an agreement with a landlord to abate lead paint in 9 rental units.



5 - MFHC filed two federal complaints against a large rental agency and two rental property owners for housing discrimination against families with children. On June 28, 2021, MFHC filed two complaints

against Defendants, RentNoho.com and two rental property owners. The complaints allege that the Defendants discriminated against families with children by making housing unavailable to these families in violation of federal and state law.

6 - Protecting the housing rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing

individuals. On March 23, 2021, Superior Court Judge Edward McDonough approved a settlement agreement based on MFHC's fair housing investigation of Peabody Properties. MFHC's testing revealed that Peabody refused to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing applicants during the application process. Peabody Properties, Inc, manages over 13,000 units nationwide, including 139 properties in Massachusetts. For additional information, see MFHC's [press release](#) and articles by [Framingham SOURCE](#) and [WWLP](#).

7 - Protecting a Section 8 recipient from unwarranted displacement. Our client, "Juan," moved in with his mother in 2020 to care for her after she contracted COVID. Before she succumbed to the disease, she did everything she could to allow her son, who had Section 8, to remain in her apartment. Although the law allowed this, the landlord, a large multinational corporation, refused to allow Juan to remain. Instead, the landlord tried to displace him during a global pandemic for no reason. After many months of advocacy by MFHC's attorneys, the assistance of a national expert, and additional help from State Senator Gomez's staff, and City Councilor, Jesse Lederman, the landlord finally agreed that Juan could remain in his home.

8 - MFHC enforcement action results in Probable Cause finding at MCAD. After investigating advertisements by a large realty company in Berkshire County, MFHC found evidence of discrimination against families with children. MFHC's testing revealed that the property management company, Moresi & Associates, was discouraging families with children from renting at one of their complexes. MFHC filed a complaint with the MCAD, which resulted in a finding of probable cause. The case was referred to the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office for further investigation.

9 - MFHC enforcement action results in \$15,000 settlement for a victim of housing discrimination. When our client received her Section 8 voucher in 2019, she diligently began searching for housing. However, she was repeatedly rejected by landlords who would not consider renting to her because she had children under age six. MFHC investigated her complaint and when we found a landlord who discriminated against her twice, we filed a complaint with HUD and eventually negotiated a settlement for \$15,000 and an agreement by the landlord to delead the properties.



10 - In January, 2022, MFHC and three other fair housing organizations will begin a new collaboration to enforce the state's anti-discrimination laws. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has awarded MFHC, Community Legal Aid, SouthCoast Fair Housing, and the Suffolk Housing Discrimination Testing Project funding to enforce the state's anti-discrimination laws. This exciting new project will provide everyone in the Commonwealth with greater access to fair housing services, regardless of their location.

In addition to all of the above...

11 - Our 15th Annual Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference held virtually from April 13-15th was an unqualified success. The conference featured: Dr. Tiffany Manuel, Professor Deborah N. Archer, and Acting Assistant Secretary of Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity Jeanine Worden. Stay tuned for more information about our 2022 conference which will be held April 5-7th.

12 - MFHC's Executive Director, Meris Bergquist, was invited to participate on the statewide Housing Quality and Health (HQH) Task Force, organized by Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC). The primary goal of the task force will be to substantially improve the quality of existing housing stock in Massachusetts through advocacy centered around the following objectives: data, dollars, and direction. To learn more see MACDC's, "[Housing Quality's and Health: Revealing the Connections, Addressing the Challenges](#)".



As we begin a new year, MFHC sends you warm wishes for a better and more equitable world in 2022. We are so grateful to everyone who donated to us this year. If you haven't contributed yet, please know that your support will help us provide safe and stable housing for all. Will you consider donating today?

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not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

57 Suffolk St, Holyoke MA 01060 | info@massfairhousing.org | (413) 539-9796

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