



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **State Settles Housing Discrimination Case Involving Disability Service Dog**

(Salem, OR) — Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian today announced an agreement that resolves housing discrimination allegations against the Housing Authority of Douglas County (HADCO).

“Housing is a basic human need, and equal access to housing, especially for our most vulnerable citizens, is a basic component of equality,” Attorney General Rosenblum said.

In 2009, a HADCO tenant named Raynie Casebier filed a complaint with the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), alleging disability discrimination. After a thorough investigation, BOLI found substantial evidence of unlawful discrimination.

Ms. Casebier was caring for her daughter, five years old at the time, who suffers from a life-threatening case of Type I Diabetes. Certain kinds of dogs can be trained to detect and alert when a diabetic’s blood sugar levels are dangerously low. Ms. Casebier obtained a service puppy to live with them while being trained to detect these critical fluctuations.

Despite the fact that the dog was a service animal, a HADCO property manager demanded that Ms. Casebier remove the dog, and began eviction proceedings when she refused. The Casebier family faced repeated harassment from on-site maintenance staff, who questioned the validity of this type of service animal. The family was eventually forced to move to a non-subsidized property. As a result of stress in the home, the service animal failed to bond with the girl, and the family was unable to obtain a replacement.

“No Oregonian should be subjected to unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment in housing, employment or public places,” said Labor Commissioner Avakian. “Our agency is committed to conducting thorough investigations and working closely with agency partners so that the civil rights of Oregonians are protected.”

State and federal laws prohibit housing discrimination based on disability, and require landlords to make reasonable accommodations. HADCO acknowledged mistakes, and agreed to cooperatively resolve the fair housing claims. Under the agreement, HADCO will pay a total of \$167,000 in damages, including nearly \$100,000 to the Casebier family and their attorney. HADCO will also pay civil penalties and attorneys’ fees to BOLI and the Oregon Department of Justice. HADCO has agreed to send its employees to trainings focusing on state and federal discrimination law, and will allow BOLI to monitor its evaluation of future reasonable accommodation requests.

Copies of the original BOLI complaint are available upon request. Landlords seeking guidance on disability rights and service animal protections can contact BOLI’s Technical Assistance for Employers Program at (971) 673-0824 to avoid potential civil rights violations.

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