

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

"A World Class City"

Human Rights Commission

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www.charlottesville.gov/963/Human-Rights-Commission



November 30, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing as Chair of Charlottesville's Human Rights Commission to express deep concern about the policy of several local hotels, including yours, to prohibit occupancy by certain individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the Human Rights Commission is to act as a strong advocate for justice and equal opportunity by providing citywide leadership and guidance in the area of civil and human rights.

The refusal to rent to individuals with substance abuse and/or mental illness is deeply harmful and appears to raise significant issues of discrimination. For example, Partner for Mental Health ("PMH") has been told on multiple occasions that your hotel has a policy of not renting to clients of the agency. PMH has been told, quite literally, "we don't rent to your people." This experience is not limited to the clients of PMH but has also been applied to clients of other agencies and non-profits. Even when a respected non-profit which assists individuals at risk of homelessness is prepared pay for the cost of that housing—thus ensuring that the hotel will receive full payment—individuals have been flatly denied the ability to secure housing at the hotel.

People experiencing mental illness or the disease of addiction are in many cases protected by anti-discrimination laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and federal and state Fair Housing laws. Because many people with substance use disorder are protected under these laws, having a blanket policy of refusing to rent to these individuals is potentially unlawful and discriminatory. Further, it is unlawful to discriminate against individuals based on the source of their funds. Your policy is not only unlawful, but cruel and unnecessary.

We strongly urge you to do the right thing and immediately rescind your policy of refusing to rent to individuals suffering from mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Your current policy is legally questionable and puts very vulnerable people at greater risk of homelessness.

Please feel free to contact me by email at bauerma@charlottesville.gov or by phone at 470-606-9307 to discuss these matters. The temperature has fallen well below freezing the past several evenings, and thus this matter is of grave concern to the Commission.

Sincerely,

Mary Bauer

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Chair, Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Commissioners:

- Mary Bauer (Chair)
- Kathryn Laughon (Vice-Chair)
- Jeanette Abi-Nader
- Ernest Chambers
- Jessica Harris
- Wolfgang Keppley
- Tobiah Mundt
- Andrew Orban
- Lyndele Von Schill