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## SENATE BILL NO. 1121

Offered January 21, 1999

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 2.1-716, 2.1-725, 36-96.1, 36-96.3, 36-96.4, 36-96.6, and 55-248.47 of the Code of Virginia, relating to nondiscriminatory practices in employment and housing.

Patrons—Whipple, Edwards, Howell, Lambert, Lucas, Marsh and Miller, Y.B.; Delegates: Almand, Brink, Christian, Darner, Hull, Jones, J.C., McEachin, Melvin, Moran, Plum, Van Lantham, Van Yahres and Watts

Referred to Committee on General Laws

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

1. That §§ 2.1-716, 2.1-725, 36-96.1, 36-96.3, 36-96.4, 36-96.6 and 55-248.47 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 2.1-716. Unlawful discriminatory practice defined.

Conduct which violates any Virginia or federal statute or regulation governing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, *sexual orientation*, or disability shall be an "unlawful discriminatory practice" for the purposes of this chapter.

§ 2.1-725. Causes of action not created.

A. Nothing in this chapter creates, nor shall it be construed to create, an independent or private cause of action to enforce its provisions, except as specifically provided in subsections B and C of this section.

B. No employer employing more than five but less than fifteen persons shall discharge any such employee on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, *sexual orientation*, or of age if the employee is forty years or older.

C. The employee may bring an action in a general district or circuit court having jurisdiction over the employer who allegedly discharged the employee in violation of this section. Any such action shall be brought within 180 days from the date of the discharge. The court may award up to twelve months' back pay with interest at the judgment rate as provided in § 6.1-330.54. However, if the court finds that either party engaged in tactics to delay resolution of the complaint, it may (i) diminish the award or (ii) award back pay to the date of judgment without regard to the twelve-month limitation.

In any case where the employee prevails, the court shall award attorney's fees from the amount recovered, not to exceed twenty-five percent of the back pay awarded. The court shall not award other damages, compensatory or punitive, nor shall it order reinstatement of the employee.

D. Causes of action based upon the public policies reflected in this chapter shall be exclusively limited to those actions, procedures and remedies, if any, afforded by applicable federal or state civil rights statutes or local ordinances. Nothing in this section or § 2.1-715 shall be deemed to alter, supersede, or otherwise modify the authority of the Council on Human Rights or of any local human rights or human relations commissions established pursuant to §§ 15.1-37.3:8 and 15.1-783.1 or subject to the provisions of § 2.1-724.

§ 36-96.1. Declaration of policy.

A. This chapter shall be known and referred to as the Virginia Fair Housing Law.

B. It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide for fair housing throughout the Commonwealth, to all its citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap, and to that end to prohibit discriminatory practices with respect to residential housing by any person or group of persons, in order that the peace, health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of all the inhabitants of the Commonwealth may be protected and insured. This law shall be deemed an exercise of the police power of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the protection of the people of the Commonwealth.

§ 36-96.3. Unlawful discriminatory housing practices.

A. It shall be an unlawful discriminatory housing practice for any person:

1. To refuse to sell or rent after the making of a bona fide offer or to refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, *sexual orientation*, or familial status;

2. To discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in the connection therewith to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, *sexual orientation*, or familial status;

3. To make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or

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discrimination or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap. The use of words or symbols associated with a particular religion, national origin, sex, or race shall be prima facie evidence of an illegal preference under this chapter which shall not be overcome by a general disclaimer. However, reference alone to places of worship including, but not limited to, churches, synagogues, temples, or mosques in any such notice, statement or advertisement shall not be prima facie evidence of an illegal preference;

4. To represent to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap that any dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when such dwelling is in fact so available;

5. To deny any person access to membership in or participation in any multiple listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or other service, organization or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings, or to discriminate against such person in the terms or conditions of such access, membership, or participation because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap;

6. To include in any transfer, sale, rental, or lease of housing, any restrictive covenant that discriminates because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap or for any person to honor or exercise, or attempt to honor or exercise any such discriminatory covenant pertaining to housing;

7. To induce or attempt to induce to sell or rent any dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a particular race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap;

8. To refuse to sell or rent, or refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise discriminate or make unavailable or deny a dwelling because of a handicap of (i) the buyer or renter, (ii) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it is so sold, rented or made available, or (iii) any person associated with the buyer or renter;

9. To discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection therewith because of a handicap of (i) that person, (ii) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it was so sold, rented or made available, or (iii) any person associated with that buyer or renter.

B. For the purposes of this section, discrimination includes: (i) a refusal to permit, at the expense of the handicapped person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by any person if such modifications may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises; except that, in the case of a rental, the landlord may, where it is reasonable to do so, condition permission for a modification on the renter's agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted; (ii) a refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, practices, policies, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford such person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; or (iii) in connection with the design and construction of covered multi-family dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, a failure to design and construct dwellings in such a manner that:

1. The public use and common use areas of the dwellings are readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons;

2. All the doors designed to allow passage into and within all premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs; and

3. All premises within covered multi-family dwelling units contain an accessible route into and through the dwelling; light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls are in accessible locations; there are reinforcements in the bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars; and there are usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space. As used in this subdivision the term "covered multi-family dwellings" means buildings consisting of four or more units if such buildings have one or more elevators and ground floor units in other buildings consisting of four or more units.

C. Compliance with the appropriate requirements of the American National Standards for Building and Facilities (commonly cited as "ANSI A117.1") or with any other standards adopted as part of regulations promulgated by HUD providing accessibility and usability for physically handicapped people shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements § 36-96.3 B 3.

D. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to invalidate or limit any Virginia law or regulation which requires dwellings to be designed and constructed in a manner that affords handicapped persons greater access than is required by this chapter.

§ 36-96.4. Discrimination in residential real estate-related transactions; unlawful practices by lenders, insurers, appraisers, etc.; deposit of state funds in such institutions.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person or other entity, including any lending institution, whose business includes engaging in residential real estate-related transactions, to discriminate against any

person in making available such a transaction, or in the terms or conditions of such a transaction, or in the manner of providing such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap. It shall not be unlawful, however, for any person or other entity whose business includes engaging in residential real estate transactions to require any applicant to qualify financially for the loan or loans for which such person is making application.

B. As used in this section, the term "residential real estate-related transaction" means any of the following:

1. The making or purchasing of loans or providing other financial assistance (i) for purchasing, constructing, improving, repairing, or maintaining a dwelling or (ii) secured by residential real estate; or

2. The selling, brokering, insuring or appraising of residential real property. However, nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a person engaged in the business of furnishing appraisals of real property to take into consideration factors other than race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap.

C. It shall be unlawful for any state, county, city, or municipal treasurer or governmental official whose responsibility it is to account for, to invest, or manage public funds to deposit or cause to be deposited any public funds in any lending institution provided for herein which is found to be committing discriminatory practices, where such findings were upheld by any court of competent jurisdiction. Upon such a court's judicial enforcement of any order to restrain a practice of such lending institution or for said institution to cease or desist in a discriminatory practice, the appropriate fiscal officer or treasurer of the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof which has funds deposited in any lending institution which is practicing discrimination, as set forth herein, shall take immediate steps to have the said funds withdrawn and redeposited in another lending institution. If for reasons of sound economic management, this action will result in a financial loss to the Commonwealth or any of its political subdivisions, the action may be deferred for a period not longer than one year. If the lending institution in question has corrected its discriminatory practices, any prohibition set forth in this section shall not apply.

§ 36-96.6. Certain restrictive covenants void; instruments containing such covenants.

A. Any restrictive covenant and any related reversionary interest, purporting to restrict occupancy or ownership of property on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, *sexual orientation*, or handicap, whether heretofore or hereafter included in an instrument affecting the title to real or leasehold property, are declared to be void and contrary to the public policy of this Commonwealth.

B. Any person who is asked to accept a document affecting title to real or leasehold property may decline to accept the same if it includes such a covenant or reversionary interest until the covenant or reversionary interest has been removed from the document. Refusal to accept delivery of an instrument for this reason shall not be deemed a breach of a contract to purchase, lease, mortgage, or otherwise deal with such property.

C. No person shall solicit or accept compensation of any kind for the release or removal of any covenant or reversionary interest described in subsection A. Any person violating this subsection shall be liable to any person injured thereby in an amount equal to the greater of three times the compensation solicited or received, or \$500, plus reasonable attorney's' fees and costs incurred.

D. A family care home, foster home, or group home in which physically handicapped, mentally ill, mentally retarded, or developmentally disabled persons reside, with one or more resident counselors or other staff persons, shall be considered for all purposes residential occupancy by a single family when construing any restrictive covenant which purports to restrict occupancy or ownership of real or leasehold property to members of a single family or to residential use or structure.

§ 55-248.47. Sale or lease of manufactured home by owner.

The landlord shall not unreasonably refuse or restrict the sale or rental of a manufactured home located in his manufactured home park by a tenant. The landlord shall not prohibit the manufactured home owner from placing a "for sale" sign on or in his home except that the size, placement, and character of all signs are subject to the rules and regulations of the park. Prior to selling or leasing the manufactured home the tenant shall give notice to the landlord, including, but not limited to, the name of the prospective vendee or lessee if the prospective vendee or lessee intends to occupy the manufactured home in that manufactured home park. The landlord shall have the burden of proving that his refusal or restriction regarding the sale or rental of a manufactured home was reasonable. The refusal or restriction of the sale or rental of a manufactured home based exclusively or predominantly on the age of the home shall be considered unreasonable. Any refusal or restriction because of race, color, religion, national origin, familial status, elderliness, handicap, *sexual orientation*, or sex shall be conclusively presumed to be unreasonable.