

Fair Housing Laws

City of Cumberland, Maryland

Chapter 9 HUMAN RIGHTS of the City of Cumberland Code makes it illegal to discriminate in real estate transactions on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, or physical or mental disability. The Office of Fair Housing investigates and conciliates complaints filed under Chapter 9.

The State of Maryland

Title 20 of the Maryland Annotated Code makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, marital status, physical or mental disability, national origin, sex, or familial status. The Maryland Commission on Human Relations investigates and conciliates complaints filed under Title 20. Real Estate Law (BOP, Section 16-526), forbids discriminatory practices by real estate brokers or agents, putting them at risk of losing their license. The Real Estate Commission enforces this law.

The Federal Government

The Fair Housing Amendments Act makes it illegal to discriminate in the sale or rental of housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) investigates and conciliates housing complaints filed under the FHAA. Persons who consider themselves to be victims of housing discrimination can file suit in Federal Court. Other federal laws providing mortgage-lending protection include the:

- Equal Credit Opportunity Act
- Truth in Lending Act
- Home Ownership & Equity Protection Act of 1994
- Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA)

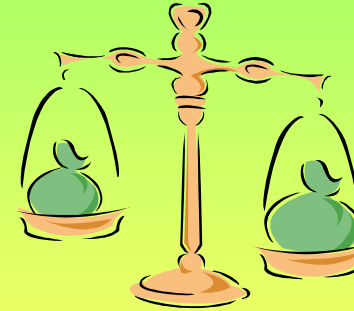


Lending Laws

Credit is used by millions of consumers to finance an education or a house, remodel a home, or get a small business loan. The Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) ensures that all consumers are given an equal chance to obtain credit. This doesn't mean all consumers who apply for credit get it. Factors such as income, expenses, debt and credit history are considerations for creditworthiness. The law protects you when you deal with any lender who regularly extends credit, including banks, mortgage companies small loan and finance companies, retail and department stores, credit card companies, and credit unions. Anyone involved in granting credit, such as a real estate broker who arranges financing, is covered by the law. Chapter 9 of the Cumberland Code states that it is an unlawful housing practice "For any lending institution to discriminate in lending money, guaranteeing loans, accepting a deed of trust or mortgage, or otherwise making available funds for the purchase, acquisition, construction, alteration, rehabilitation, repair, or maintenance of any housing or to discriminate in the fixing of the rates, terms, conditions, or provisions of any such financial assistance, or in the extension of service in connection therewith because of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, or physical or mental disability."



If You Suspect Discrimination



Contact:

Cumberland Human Relations Commission
13 Canal St., Suite 304
Cumberland, MD 21502
fairhousingspecialist@allconet.org
www.ci.cumberland.md.us
(301) 795-6659

Maryland Commission on Human Relations
6 Saint Paul St.
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
www.mchr.state.md.us
(800) 637-6247

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
10 S. Howard St., 5th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201
www.hud.gov
1-(800) 669-9777

Maryland Real Estate Commission
(410) 333-6230

CUMBERLAND OFFICE OF FAIR HOUSING AND HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

13 Canal St., Suite 304

Western Maryland Railway Station
Cumberland, MD 21502

Phone: 301-759-6659, City Information: 301-722-2000

email: fairhousingspecialist@allconet.org

webpage: www.ci.cumberland.md.us



CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
&
OFFICE OF FAIR HOUSING

FAIR HOUSING:

LENDING PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

How to Recognize Discriminatory Practices



HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY

WE DO BUSINESS IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE FEDERAL HOUSING LAW EQUAL

You have the right to...

- Have a mortgage in your birth name, your first and your spouse's last name, or your first name and a combined last name.
- Get a mortgage without a cosigner, if you meet the creditor's standards.
- Know whether your application was accepted or rejected within 30 days of filing a complete application.
- Know why your application was rejected. The creditor must give you a notice that tells you either the specific reasons for your rejection or your right to learn the reasons if you ask within 60 days.

Acceptable reasons include:

- “Your income was too low,” or
- “You haven't been employed long enough.”

Unacceptable reasons are:

- “You didn't meet our minimum standards,” or
- “You didn't receive enough points on our credit-scoring system.”

Indefinite and vague reasons are illegal, so ask the creditor to be specific.

- Find out why you were offered less favorable terms than you applied for even if you accept the terms. Ask for details. Examples of less favorable terms include higher finance charges or less money than you requested.

- Find out why your account was closed or why the terms of the account were made less favorable unless the account was inactive or delinquent.



When you apply for a mortgage,

LENDERS MAY NOT

- Discourage you from applying for or denying you a loan. You are protected on the basis of your race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, or physical or mental disability.
- Ask if you're widowed or divorced. When permitted to ask marital status, a creditor may only use the terms: married, unmarried, or separated.
- Request information about your spouse, except when your spouse is applying with you, or if you are relying on your spouse's income or on alimony or child support from a former spouse. They cannot inquire about your plans for having or raising children.
- Ask if you receive alimony, child support, or separate maintenance payments, unless you are first told that you don't have to provide this information if you're not relying on these payments to get the mortgage, a creditor may ask if you have to pay alimony, child support, or separate maintenance payments.

When deciding to give you a mortgage,

LENDERS MAY NOT

- Consider your race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, or physical or mental disability.
- Consider the race of people in the neighborhood where you want to buy, refinance or improve a house with borrowed money.
- Consider your age, unless:
 - You are too young to sign contracts, generally younger than 18 years of age.
 - You are 62 or older, it's used to determine the meaning of other factors important to credit worthiness. For example, a creditor could use your age to determine if your income might drop because you're about to retire.
 - It's used in a valid scoring system that favors applicants age 62 and older, a credit scoring system assigns points to answers you provide to credit application questions. For example, your length of employment might be scored differently depending on your age.



When evaluating your income,

LENDERS MAY NOT

- Refuse to consider public assistance income the same way as other income.
- Discount income because of your sex or marital status, example, a creditor cannot count a man's salary at 100 percent and a woman's at 75 percent.
- Assume a woman of childbearing age will stop working to raise children.
- Discount or refuse to consider income because it comes from part-time employment or pension, annuity, or retirement benefits programs.
- Refuse to consider regular alimony, child support, or separate maintenance payments. A creditor may ask you to prove you have received this income consistently.



A special credit note

A good credit history—a record of how you paid past bills—often is necessary to get credit. Unfortunately, this hurts many married, separated, divorced, or widowed women. There are two common reasons women don't have credit histories in their own names: they lost their credit histories when they married and changed their names; or creditors reported accounts shared by married couples in the husband's name only. If you're married, divorced, separated, or widowed, contact your local credit bureau to make sure all relevant information is in a file under your own name.

