

## LOCAL

# Lansing apartment resident settles Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act suit with Capitol Commons housing complex



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LANSING — A Lansing man with dwarfism and the operators of the apartment complex where he lives have settled a federal lawsuit over accommodations he sought through the Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act.

Daniel Black sued Capitol Commons Apartments and Townhomes, 600 S. Sycamore St., and the Lansing-based First Housing Corporation in federal court in December 2022 seeking a roll-in shower for his unit and an accessible electric entrance door.

"I was tired of contorting myself to get over the side of the bathtub," Black said in a press release issued by the Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan, which covers 10 counties. "It was dangerous, especially since I had already endured four back surgeries to relieve spinal pain. I have extensive metal hardware in my spine that severely limits my mobility.

"I wasn't seeking anything unreasonable. I needed a reasonable modification to my ground floor accessible apartment. I wanted what everyone else had, access to their bathing and showering facilities."

A message was left with the attorneys representing the complex and First Housing Corporation.

Black, who has lived at Capitol Commons for more than 10 years, requested that his federally subsidized apartment, which had a bathtub/shower, be outfitted with a roll-in shower during the summer of 2022. The lawsuit noted that the sides of the existing tub were 16 inches tall while Black's inseam was just 17 inches.

"He also requested that the building install an accessible electric entrance door so that he, other seniors, and people with disabilities could freely come and go without assistance from their accessible apartments," the Fair Housing Center release said.

In addition to the shower and entry door, Black's suit sought compensatory and punitive damages, as well as attorney fees and costs.

The suit was dismissed Sept. 20 following an undisclosed settlement. Online court records indicate both sides agreed to pay their own attorney's fees. The release says Capitol Commons installed the shower and entry door Black requested.

The lawsuit notes that in 2015 the complex "made alterations to Mr. Black's kitchen and bathroom countertops to accommodate his height; therefore, they are aware of Mr. Black's disabilities and their obligations to address them."

The Fair Housing Center staff wrote letters in 2022, spoke with representatives, including their attorney, met with Capital Commons staff, and took in the local housing inspector in an effort to resolve the complaint with Capital Commons and management company First Housing, the release claimed.

"Each time we made a request on behalf of Daniel Black, the landlord and corporate management had another reason for denying and delaying the accommodation," said Niki Green, FHC coordinator of investigations and legal research.

First Housing Corporation is a real estate development and management firm providing a full range of support services to investors, according to its website.