

Civil Rights Lawsuit Alleges that Senior Housing Provider Is Illegally Forcing Residents with Disabilities Out of Their Homes

For Immediate Release

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ANN ARBOR, MI (August 8, 2018) -- Lurie Terrace, an affordable senior housing apartment complex in downtown Ann Arbor, faces allegations that it discriminates against its tenants with disabilities by forcing them to move out through harassment and intimidation.

Today, AARP Foundation, Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM), and the University of Michigan Clinical Law Program [filed suit in federal court](#) on behalf of Clark Cooper, a former resident of Lurie Terrace, Gartha Parrish, a current resident, and the Lurie Terrace Tenants Association, an organization formed to advocate for residents' rights. The suit alleges that Lurie Terrace's policies and practices violate the federal Fair Housing Act and Michigan state law, including the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act and the Michigan Consumer Protection Act.

"Lurie Terrace has been systematically targeting, bullying, and pushing out tenants who have health conditions or need extra help," says Elizabeth Benton, an LSSCM attorney, "That's disability discrimination, and it has to stop." According to the complaint filed today, Lurie Terrace harasses tenants it perceives as unable to "live independently" – a phrase that has no legal definition and is predicated only upon the landlord's subjective ideas about how people with disabilities live their lives. The lawsuit argues that Lurie Terrace uses the notion of "independent living" to force tenants with disabilities to move, even if those tenants are meeting all the requirements of the lease.

"Civil rights laws ensure that people with disabilities can decide for themselves where and how to live in the community of their choosing," says Susan Silverstein, Senior Attorney at AARP Foundation. "The law doesn't allow landlords to refuse to accommodate tenants with disabilities," adds a lawyer for the Michigan Clinical Law Program, "and it certainly doesn't allow landlords to refuse to let tenants age in place just because they might need some outside help."

Plaintiff Clark Cooper, who has autism and a hearing impairment, lived at Lurie Terrace for twelve years until a new property manager revoked longstanding accommodations the complex had made for Cooper's disabilities and contacted his family, threatening to evict him if he didn't leave immediately. "Lurie Terrace's insistence that Clark move out within 30 days when he hadn't done anything wrong was shocking," says Cooper's brother, David. "After years of being a valued member of the community, he was suddenly made to feel unwanted."

Plaintiff Gartha Parrish, who lives at Lurie Terrace, also has a disability. She's witnessed Lurie Terrace's management targeting other residents with disabilities and she's afraid she'll be next. "I'm extremely upset at the way management has yelled at my neighbors and threatened to force them out. I'm worried about them," said says Parrish, "and I'm worried that if they force me to move, too, I won't be able to afford to live anywhere else on my Social Security."

Through their lawsuit, the plaintiffs are asking the court to recognize Lurie Terrace's practices as discriminatory and prevent the complex from forcing tenants with disabilities to leave their homes when they remain capable of meeting all of their lease obligations.

***AARP Foundation** works to end senior poverty by helping vulnerable older adults build economic opportunity and social connectedness. As AARP's charitable affiliate, we serve AARP members and nonmembers alike. Bolstered by vigorous legal advocacy, we spark bold, innovative solutions that foster resilience, strengthen communities and restore hope.*

***Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM)** provides free civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families with an emphasis on homelessness prevention, domestic violence prevention and assistance in accessing health care, food, and needs-based income programs. LSSCM has several locations across the state including Ypsilanti serving Washtenaw County. LSSCM is a division of the Michigan Advocacy Program. For more information visit www.lsscm.org and www.miadvocacy.org.*

***The University of Michigan Law School's Civil-Criminal Litigation Clinic** represents Michigan residents who cannot otherwise afford a lawyer in cases large and small. Upper-level law students staff the cases under faculty supervision, in the same way that medical students provide patient care as part of their medical education. Students learn the basics of practicing law while performing much-needed pro bono service in their local community.*