

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING  
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DANIEL R. CASTLE, AICP  
COMMISSIONER

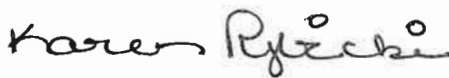
January 29, 2025

Mark C. Poloncarz  
County Executive  
Room 1600, Rath Building  
95 Franklin Street  
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Mr. Poloncarz:

Enclosed you will find the 2024 Erie County Fair Housing Board Annual Report. Erie County's Fair Housing Law was enacted in May of 2018. The 2024 annual report lists board activities as required by Section 6 (E) (3) of the Fair Housing Law.

Sincerely,



Karen Rybicki  
Erie County Fair Housing Board, Chairperson

cc: Erie County Legislature

## **ERIE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING BOARD - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Board of Directors**

Karen Rybicki  
Board Chair  
Erie County Commissioner  
Department of Social Services

Terri Flaherty  
Board Vice-chair  
Belmont Housing Resources for Western New York

Nico Soria  
Board Secretary  
Western New York Law Center

Sharon L. Ciminelli  
Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors

Karen King  
Erie County Commissioner of Public Advocacy

### **Board Staff**

Daniel R. Castle  
Ex-officio  
Erie County Commissioner Department of Environment & Planning

Richard Stanton  
Legal Counsel  
Erie County Department of Law

As per Section 6 of the Erie County Fair Housing Law, fair housing board positions were chosen according to the requirements shown below:

- (a) One member upon recommendation from the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors;
- (b) One member upon recommendation from the Western New York Law Center or Neighborhood Legal Services;
- (c) One member upon recommendation from Belmont Housing Resources for Western New York or the Rental Assistance Corporation of Buffalo;
- (d) The Erie County Commissioner of Public Advocacy or designee; and
- (e) The Erie County First Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Social Services or designee – Family Independence.

Board members are listed above.

As per Section 10 of the law, entitled Education and Promotion of Fair Housing Goals, Erie County continued to take steps to affirmatively further and promote fair housing in 2024 by sharing educational materials and obligations within the law to housing providers and real estate brokers within Erie County.

Board of Director's met for their first meeting of 2024, on February 13th. The board meets quarterly with a HOLD meeting scheduled each month for housing discrimination cases that are brought to the board. Board meetings in 2024 were held in person. There were 4 meetings held during 2024- meeting minutes are attached.

Eight discrimination cases were brought to the board in 2024.

One case was also filed as a complaint with HUD and was referred to the NYS Division of Human Rights where a conciliation agreement was reached. One case was referred to the Erie County Attorney's Office after the Board found discriminatory actions had taken place and no conciliation agreement could be reached. This case is ongoing. The remaining six cases are being worked on through conciliation agreements.

As per Section 5 (A) of the law, Erie County has designated a not-for-profit fair housing organization, Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), to assist with the implementation of the law. Services include, fielding fair housing discrimination complaints from residents of Erie County, referral services for residents with housing and human service needs and paralegal counseling to assist in resolving landlord/tenant disputes.

Results of HOME's work in 2024 are as follows:

**Housing discrimination complaints-** - 71 cases of potential housing discrimination were investigated. 63 cases were resolved, and 8 cases were brought to the Fair Housing Board in 2024. Of those 8 cases, 1 case was referred to the County Attorney's Office and the 7 other cases are in the process of being conciliated.

**Landlord/Tenant dispute cases-** 226 people were assisted with advice on resolving landlord/tenant dispute issues.

**Referral services-** 197 people were assisted with referral services regarding housing and human service issues.