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**Attorney General Brown Files Lawsuit Against Eastern Shore  
Landlord for Violating Civil Rights Laws**  
*New Civil Rights Division with Historic Authority Initiates First Case*

**BALTIMORE, MD (July 19, 2024)** – In a historic first for the Office of the Attorney General and the State of Maryland, Attorney General Anthony G. Brown announced today that the newly established Civil Rights Division filed its first lawsuit in the Circuit Court for Wicomico County against Eric Sessoms and Mt. Vernon Group, LLC. for engaging in a pattern or practice of gender-based discrimination in housing.

Sessoms operates and manages Eastern Shore rental properties owned by Mt. Vernon Group, LLC. The investigation conducted by the Civil Rights Division found that there is reasonable cause to believe that, in his management role, Sessoms subjected women who were tenants and prospective tenants to unwelcome and severe or pervasive sexual harassment in violation of the Fair Housing Act and Maryland’s anti-discrimination laws.

“For too long predatory landlords have taken advantage of people in financial and housing crisis by abusing their power as housing providers to make sexual demands of tenants or prospective tenants – often low-income women and single mothers,” **said Attorney General Anthony Brown.** “In Maryland, that ends today. This historic filing puts landlords on notice: you cannot sexually harass your tenants. And if you do, the Office of the Attorney General will take action.”

The complaint alleges that Eric Sessoms specifically preyed on vulnerable women either experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness. He targeted women facing financial difficulties to exploit those vulnerabilities. He offered housing benefits, like reduced rent, in exchange for sexual favors and subjected women tenants and prospective tenants to unwanted sexual advances, unwelcome sexual contact, unsolicited sexual comments, and other egregious conduct in a discriminatory fashion on the basis of his tenants’ and prospective tenants’ gender.

"Maryland is already suffering from a tragic housing crisis, impacting so many families—primarily women with children—who are left with too few options. Landlords, like Sessoms, who take full advantage of women in desperate situations and broker in insidious, gender-based discrimination, cannot be tolerated," **said Vicki Schultz, Executive Director of Maryland Legal Aid, the state's largest provider of free civil legal services.** "We are proud to have partnered with the Attorney General's Civil Rights Division on this case from day one, and we will continue collaborating on behalf of Maryland's most vulnerable people and communities."

The Civil Rights Division seeks injunctive relief, restitution for tenants and prospective tenants harmed by Sessoms' conduct, civil penalties, and the costs of the investigation and litigation against Eric Sessom and Mt. Vernon Group, LLC.

It is illegal for landlords to take retaliatory actions against tenants or prospective tenants who refuse a landlord's sexual advances or who report or object to harassing behavior. If you have any information to share about Eric Sessoms or Mt. Vernon Group LLC., please call 1-833-282-2977 or email [MDvSessoms@oag.state.md.us](mailto:MDvSessoms@oag.state.md.us).

Sexual harassment in housing is prohibited by Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 20-705 and provisions of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-3619 ("Fair Housing Act"). Housing providers may not engage in unwanted sexual conduct which may include, but is not limited to, making sexual comments about someone's appearance, suggesting tenants engage in sex acts in exchange for housing benefits, and any physical contact that someone either did not consent to or was coerced into participating in. It is illegal even if the person being subject to the sexual harassment did not experience the loss of a housing opportunity or other economic loss.

The Civil Rights Division of the Office of the Attorney General was launched on January 1, 2024. The Division was formed after Attorney General Brown successfully sought the authority to enforce federal, state, and local civil rights laws from the Governor and the General Assembly upon assuming Office in 2023, which was a first in Maryland history. The Division reflects Attorney General Brown's broader commitment to justice and equity and has already undertaken several additional investigations into patterns of civil rights violations across the state.

You can report civil rights violations to the Office of the Attorney General by email at [civilrights@oag.state.md.us](mailto:civilrights@oag.state.md.us) or you can submit a complaint on our website at <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/CivilRights/default.aspx> or by calling 410-576-6300 and an investigator will follow up with you.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Brown thanks the Chief of the Civil Rights Division Jonathan Smith; Deputy Chief Rashida Ogletree-George; Assistant Attorneys General Janee Fountain and Tyler Cochran; Investigator Kelsey Richards; and Paralegal Clarissa Hibler for working to bring forth the first lawsuit filed by the new Civil Rights Division. Attorney General Brown also thanks Maryland Legal Aid for its partnership and commitment to providing free civil legal services to low-income Marylanders.

- [Maryland v Sessoms and Mt Vernon Group LLC Complaint](#)
- [English Gender Based Discrimination in Housing Factsheet](#)
- [Spanish Gender Based Discrimination in Housing Factsheet](#)

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