



House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

BOB INGLIS  
4TH DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA

June 21, 2006

JUDICIARY  
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE  
SCIENCE

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7th Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Jackson:

Recently, the managers of Heritage Court Apartments in Spartanburg, South Carolina informed their tenants that they could no longer hold a Bible study in the apartment complex's common area. Heritage Court Apartments is a privately owned Section 8 facility built with insured loans from HUD and operating under HAP contracts. The managers of Heritage Court Apartments have said that they ended the Bible study because they were concerned that allowing religious activities in common areas would leave them vulnerable to complaints or lawsuits under the Fair Housing Act.

Your Office of General Counsel has already sent a helpful letter to the managers of the Heritage Court Apartments stating that their concerns are unfounded. We thank you for taking action on this. Far from prohibiting religious services in common areas, the Fair Housing Act requires that voluntary religious events be treated like any other public event. Administrators of public housing cannot discriminate according to religion.

We think this could be helpful to others and encourage you to promulgate similar clear instructions on the free exercise of religion in common areas to every entity that administers public housing, and all institutes and private bodies that provide guidance and training on Fair Housing issues. This would be helpful to both residents and entities that administer public housing. We are hopeful that the situation with Heritage Court Apartments is finally resolved and the residents of the will be allowed to hold their Bible study. However, we do not want to see similar abridgments of First Amendment rights elsewhere.

The Fair Housing Act is designed to protect the First Amendment rights of Americans, not restrict them. Americans should not have to seek permission to pray or hold a Bible study under any circumstances. Corporate concerns about litigation certainly are not sufficient reasons to prohibit religious activity. Thank you for your leadership in protecting the religious freedom of Americans.

Best Regards,

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