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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Bloomington Denies Persons with Disabilities Right to Live in Village**

### ***Local Organizations File Federal Civil Rights Administrative Complaint Against the Village of Bloomington, Illinois***

SCHAUMBURG, IL – Little City Foundation and HOPE Fair Housing Center have filed an administrative complaint with HUD’s Office of Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity against the Village of Bloomington alleging illegal discrimination against people with disabilities under the Fair Housing Act. Joined in the complaint are Bloomington homeowners who lost an opportunity to sell their home due to the Village of Bloomington’s actions.

This complaint is part of HOPE’s continuing effort to ensure compliance with civil rights laws requiring states and municipalities to end discrimination against, and unnecessary segregation of, persons with disabilities. The complaint alleges that Bloomington has impermissibly restricted group homes for people with disabilities. Under Bloomington’s zoning code, group homes (which are licensed by the state) are not permitted uses in any zoning district within the village, and are allowed as special uses in business zones only. Their ability to operate in residential zones is restricted, and there is no formal procedure set in place for a group home for persons with disabilities to seek an accommodation to locate in a residential zone.

As a result of Bloomington’s restrictive zoning ordinances, Little City Foundation was prevented from operating a state-licensed “Community-Integrated Living Arrangement” (CILA). Little City had entered into a contract to purchase a home in Bloomington. Little City intended to purchase the home to house eight adult, male residents with developmental cognitive disabilities and two non-residential staff persons providing 24-hour supervision. Little City’s application was opposed, however, by the Village Planning Commission, and it was ultimately rejected by the Village Board of Trustees.

The complainants seek an order preventing the village from enforcing its laws in a way that unlawfully discriminates on the basis of disability, and prohibiting the village from failing to make reasonable accommodations. They also seek monetary damages to compensate victims.

“It has been more than 25 years since the Fair Housing Act was amended to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities,” said **Anne Houghtaling, Executive Director of HOPE Fair Housing Center**. “The comments made by Planning Commission members are disappointing and surprising in this day and age. Discrimination is illegal and violators of the law must be held accountable.”

Bloomingtondale’s zoning ordinance restricts the number of unrelated persons who can live together in a single family detached dwelling in a residential zone to no more than three unrelated persons. Bloomingtondale’s ordinance does not allow CILAs or group homes of more than three unrelated persons to locate in residential zones as either a permissive or special use. In fact, group homes with more than three persons – which of course are virtually all group homes for people with disabilities – cannot locate, as a matter of right, anywhere in the Village of Bloomingtondale. They are allowed as special uses in business zones only.

According to **Shawn Jeffers, Executive Director of Little City Foundation**, “As a leading organization serving individuals with disabilities, it is our obligation and responsibility to be at the forefront, advocating for not only what is right, but for what is law. Ordinances designed to place unnecessary restrictions, obstacles or barriers on the right of people with disabilities to live in the community must be brought to full moral and legal compliance.”

Bloomingtondale lacks a formal procedure, such as a special use or variance procedure, that can be followed when a group home for persons with disabilities desires a reasonable accommodation in its zoning ordinance to allow the group home to locate in its residential zone under the Fair Housing Act.

Little City Foundation, HOPE Fair Housing and the Bloomingtondale homeowners are represented by Relman, Dane, and Colfax PLLC, a civil rights law firm based in Washington, DC.

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### **About Little City Foundation ([www.littlecity.org](http://www.littlecity.org))**

A private, non-profit corporation, organized under the laws of Illinois in 1959, Little City’s mission is to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are provided with the best options and opportunities to live safely, work productively, explore creatively and learn continuously throughout their lifetime. More than a place with a mission, it is a vital and vibrant community with goals to continually make great strides to further enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities, advocate on their behalf and help them flourish.

**About HOPE Fair Housing Center ([www.hopefair.org](http://www.hopefair.org) )**

Established in 1968, HOPE is the oldest fair housing center in Illinois. HOPE Fair Housing Center works to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal opportunity for all people through leadership, education and outreach, public policy initiatives, advocacy, investigation of fair housing violations, and enforcement.

**Relman, Dane & Colfax ([www.relmanlaw.com](http://www.relmanlaw.com))**

Relman, Dane & Colfax (RDC) is a civil rights law firm based in Washington, D.C., with additional offices in Ohio and New Mexico. RDC litigates civil rights cases in the areas of housing, lending, employment, public accommodations, education, and police accountability.

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