

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT EXPERIENCED HOUSING ATTORNEY AT GULF COAST OFFICE

The Mississippi Center for Justice seeks to hire an experienced housing attorney for our Gulf Coast office in Biloxi. The Center seeks an individual whose substantive experience includes, but is not limited to, a working knowledge of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Mississippi Residential Landlord-Tenant Act.

The Mississippi Center for Justice is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value a work place that is diverse in race, gender, economic status, age, geographic origin, sexual orientation, and other differences that enrich our organizational culture.

The Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm committed to advancing racial and economic justice statewide. Our lawyers work with community leaders to support their social justice campaigns and to channel the energies of the legal community to combat discrimination and poverty. With offices in Jackson, Biloxi and Indianola, we seek systemic solutions that promote educational opportunity, protect the rights of consumers, and secure access to healthcare and childcare, and make fair and affordable housing available for all Mississippians.

Fair Housing Act Enforcement

Housing Discrimination remains a persistent issue in Mississippi. Classic examples based upon race, religion, gender, national origin, disability status and familial status occur with disturbing regularity. Exclusionary zoning is regularly enacted to preserve historical patterns of segregation and support the development and maintenance of “white flight” communities.

Since 2017, the Mississippi Center for Justice Housing Law Campaign has maintained a fair housing enforcement unit to conduct investigations into individual allegations of housing discrimination, as well as systemic testing in the rental, sales, and lending markets for the purpose of identifying violations of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Our Housing Law Practice operates within a thirty-three-county area of Southern Mississippi. Identified violations are referred to HUD and/or DOJ as administrative complaints are filed as civil actions in federal district court.

Eviction Prevention

Individuals who rent in Mississippi have the fifth highest risk of being evicted in the country. The laws governing eviction in Mississippi are tilted in favor of the landlord and include provisions such as those providing for same day removal from the home upon

eviction and immediate seizure of a tenant's possessions. Since April of 2020, the Mississippi Center for Justice has maintained and staffed a statewide COVID Eviction Prevention Hotline and provided services to over 470 individuals. Services include basic information regarding MS law governing eviction; advice for negotiating with landlords; assistance applying for rental assistance; assistance preparing motions and requests for continuance; and courtroom representation at eviction proceedings in Justice Court.

Job Responsibilities

As a full-time employee, based in Biloxi and reporting to the Housing Law Director, the Housing Attorney will support a Fair Housing enforcement project designed to investigate and prosecute claims of housing discrimination in Southern Mississippi.

As Housing Attorney for the Fair Housing enforcement project, job duties will include:

- Interviewing potential clients alleging acts of housing discrimination
- Investigating allegations of housing discrimination
- Drafting and filing Fair Housing Act complaints
- Representing Fair Housing Act claimants before HUD investigators
- Assisting the project's Test Coordinator in designing tests for discrimination in the rental, sales and lending markets
- Preparing and conducting community fair housing presentations to support fair housing education and outreach project targeting rural and underserved counties in Mississippi

As Housing Attorney for the Eviction Prevention project, job duties will include:

- Staffing Eviction Prevention Hotline and interviewing callers regarding issues involving eviction or housing insecurity.
- Working with other attorneys and project manager to establish case plan for callers.
- Representing clients facing eviction in Justice Court and County Court

Qualifications

- The ideal candidate for this position will have 5-7 years of practical experience in fair housing policy and/or fair housing enforcement
- Three (3) years of practical experience in fair housing advocacy and enforcement is required.
- Licensed to practice in Mississippi
- Background in Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act is preferred
- Experience in Justice Court and County Court required
- Knowledge of MS Residential Landlord-Tenant Act required

- Excellent written and verbal communications skills
- At least (2) years of supervisory experience is preferred
- Excellent organizational, networking and relationship-building skills
- Commitment to the mission of the Mississippi Center for Justice
- Strong interpersonal communication skills including experience working with diverse racial, economic and cultural populations
- Excellent organizational and record-keeping skills.
- Technological competency: Word, Excel

The position will be open until filled. Please send brief letter of interest, resume and three (3) references, including two from former employers, to: jjopling@mscenterforjustice.org.