

State's Human Rights Act Evolves to Continue to Protect You

HIGHLIGHTS

The Illinois Human Rights Act protects anyone with federal work authorization from employment discrimination.

People associated with individuals with physical or mental disabilities are protected from discrimination in employment, real estate transactions, public accommodations, and financial credit.

It is a civil rights violation for a third-party loan modification service provider to alter or refuse service because of unlawful discrimination, familial status or arrest record.

From economic and housing security to equal access in education, Illinoisans have experienced countless challenges in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic and the evolving fights for justice and equality have tested governments' abilities to respond to the needs of the people they serve. Throughout this time, the Illinois Department of Human Rights has not stopped working to protect Illinoisans' civil rights. This year, the Department is ushering in new and expanded protections in the Illinois Human Rights Act (Act) that help create a fairer Illinois.

Effective August 2, 2021, HB 121/Public Act 102-0233 ensures that **anyone with a federal work authorization, the legal requirement necessary to work in the United States, is protected from employment discrimination.** For example, when verifying employment, employers may not refuse to hire an individual based on the status or length of status of their work authorization. The new law does not alter a person's employment eligibility as set by federal law, nor does it require an employer to sponsor an employee for changes in work authorization.

Beginning January 1, 2022, two additional expansions of the Act will take effect. First, HB1839/Public Act 102-0233 **prohibits discrimination against any individual resulting from their association with a person with a disability.** This protection extends to people who provide care to family or friends with physical or mental disabilities and is critical to protecting this group from discrimination in areas such as employment, real estate transactions, public accommodations, and financial credit.

Second, SB 1561/Public Act 102-0362 **protects individuals from discrimination by third-party loan modification services providers,** including homeowners in need of assistance in modifying a term of an existing real estate loan. The new law makes it a civil rights violation for a third-party loan modification service provider, because of unlawful discrimination, familial status and arrest record, to refuse to engage in loan modification services, to alter the terms, conditions, or privileges of such services, or to discriminate in making such services available.

While Illinois continues to recover from the pandemic, the Illinois Department of Human Rights strives to protect all Illinoisans from discrimination. The Department looks forward to working with the General Assembly in 2022 to further strengthen protections under the Illinois Human Rights Act. Anyone who believes their rights have been violated should consider filing a charge (complaint) by visiting Illinois.gov/DHR.