

House Judiciary Committee

Thank you, Chairman Filler and members of the Judiciary Committee, for this opportunity to speak. Thank you Representative Cambensy for sponsoring House Bill 5751. My name is Karlene Lehman. I sit on the Property Management Association of Michigan (PMAM), and the Apartment Association of Michigan (AAM) Board of Directors. Between the two organizations, we represent over 200,000 Michigan households.

I teach Fair Housing classes for apartment associations in Michigan and out-of-state. I previously taught fair housing to Rural Development, an arm of the Federal government. I was appointed to the National Apartment Association's Emotional Support Animal workgroup. For one year, we researched Emotional Support Animal processes and drafted a "Best Practices" manual distributed nationwide.

Federal law requires housing providers to alter existing policies or allow physical modifications to afford handicapped/disabled persons the same ability to enjoy housing as non-handicapped. These requests are called Reasonable Accommodations or Modifications. More than twenty common request types exist. In the past five years, the type of requests shifted overwhelmingly and disproportionately to ESA requests.

My company received 387 total reasonable accommodation and modification requests in the past six months. That's over 2 requests per day that should be spread **equally** among all types of modifications/accommodations. However, disproportionately, **71% were for Emotional Support Animals.**

I am a staunch believer in the therapeutic benefit of Emotional Support Animals. **Many people legitimately diagnosed with emotional or mental handicaps may benefit from an ESA. Unfortunately, emotional support animal abuse has reached epidemic levels.** An internet search for "ESA Letters" produces page after page of results. ~~ESA websites provide referrals to licensed health care providers whose job it is to write ESA letters. The websites also dupe their customers by falsely claiming ESA letters must be renewed annually as a way to ensure future income.~~

Three weeks, I applied for an ESA letter from Emotional Pet Support. I completed a 21-question survey, and paid \$119. When asked to justify my need for an ESA, I wrote *"My Mother no longer wanted her dog so I took him. Tito snuggles and makes me happy. My landlord says I cannot keep him"*. I never spoke to a health care provider; six hours later an ESA approval letter signed by an MD – licensed in Michigan - arrived via email. For \$40 more, a second ESA could have been approved.

My employer receives many letters from Michael Contreras of Bedford, TX (also licensed in MI) who runs The Wholistic Institute. When I inquired as to what Michael Contreras charged for ESA letters, he responded \$154, offered a free travel letter for planes, and \$15 referrals if I sent family and friends to his website. He'll either pay me cash or apply referral fees to annual ESA renewals. See his response email in your packet.

Lastly, your packet also contains a letter from a few years ago by LPC Ann Venet. She *"diagnosed"* me with an ESA after a 6-minute phone call from a blocked number and \$179 payment to US Service Animals. I NEVER stated I was depressed, anxious, or suffering from any ailment, but I did state my landlord would not allow my cat.

These "instant on-line diagnoses" are an affront to persons legitimately diagnosed by a health care provider they have an established patient/provider relationship with.

According to the National Apartment Association, twenty-four states already passed assistance animal laws; more states have legislation pending. In 2015, Michigan passed legislation prohibiting persons from falsely claiming the need for a service animal. We are grateful to Representative Cambensy for sponsoring House Bill 5751 which seeks to slow Emotional Support Animal abuse in Michigan. **Every paid health care letter delegitimizes valid diagnoses by health care providers with an established patient/provider relationship.**

Thank you for allowing me to express the concerns from the Property Management Association of Michigan and Apartment Association of Michigan.

Karlene Lehman E: k.lehman@prinmgmt.com C: 517-285-4588

From: US Service Animals <support@usserviceanimals.org>
Date: June 6, 2022 at 2:53:07 PM EDT
To: Karlene Lehman <karlenelehman@yahoo.com>
Subject: Pet Appreciation Week - Save 15%
Reply-To: US Service Animals <support@usserviceanimals.org>



Pet Appreciation Week – Save 15%



US SERVICE ANIMALS
OFFICIAL SERVICE & SUPPORT ANIMAL REGISTRATION

Karlene,

At U.S. Service Animals, there's nothing more important to us than our animal companions - which is why we're thrilled that this week is Pet Appreciation Week! All of us love our pets like family (because they are!), and we know well the joy, comfort, and humor they can bring! And when an animal is an ESA, the support they give can even be life-saving.

For the next 5 days we are offering 15% off on **EVERYTHING** on our website with promo code **PETWEEK15**. Try our low-cost, simple [online training program](#) for your dog and go anywhere with the little pup, or an [ESA letter](#) to claim your housing rights.



Receive a
\$15 amazon gift card
for each friend you refer
that spends a minimum of \$50.

[Get started](#)

Do you qualify
for an
ESA Letter?

[Find out Now!](#)



12:03

12:03

12:04



Emotional Pet Support



Emotional Pet Support



Emotional Pet Support

6) I feel unhappy in my current life circumstances.

Never

7) I find myself worrying about my future, my finances, or my family.

Never

8) I feel frustrated and uneasy in my current life circumstances.

Never

9) I feel burdened by my current life circumstances.

Sometimes

10) I find myself tense and up tight in my current life circumstances.

Sometimes

11) My stress level is interfering with my work.

Usually

12) My stress level is interfering with my sleep.

Never

13) My stress level is interfering with my ability to focus and concentrate on what I have to do.

Sometimes



14) I turn to Alcohol, Food or drugs to comfort me in my current life circumstances.

Never

15) I am finding that Anxiety and restlessness are disrupting my everyday Lifestyle.

Never

16) I find myself irritable and often impatient in my current life circumstances.

Never

17) Do you find yourself lonely in your current life situation?

Sometimes

18) Do you wish you had more and deeper emotional support systems?

Never

19) Does your stress level interfere with your communication with your loved ones, friends, or coworkers?

Never

20) I am subject to outbursts, Mood swings, or periods of negativity in my current life circumstances

Never

21) Which Life events have caused you significant stress this year?

21) Which Life events have caused you significant stress this year?

Other

Please describe your stress levels in detail.

I sometimes feel stress in my personal life or job. My Mom didn't want her dog anymore so I took it. Tito makes me happy but now the landlord says I can't keep him.

Have you ever seen a doctor for your emotional or mental health? Also, have you ever taken medication for your mental health?

I take melatonin to sleep

How does your animal support you when you are experiencing anxiety, depression or other emotional issues? Please give specific examples.

Tito snuggles and makes me very happy.

Have you ever received a mental health diagnosis such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc.?

I take Melatonin to sleep. Sometimes driving at night makes me anxious

Billing Address

St

United States
Map It



STEVEN W. POWELL, MD

40600 ANN ARBOR ROAD E SUITE 200, PLYMOUTH, MI 48170
E: swpowellmd@gmail.com
O: (603) 558-9135 F: (603) 218-6762 FHEO: 212237

May 09, 2022

Re: Karlene Henry

To Whom It May Concern:

I recently evaluated Karlene Henry's mental health condition. I am familiar with her history and with the functional limitations imposed by her emotional/mental health issue.

Ms. Henry meets the definition of disability under the Americans with Disability Act, the Fair Housing Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Due to this disability and mental health condition, Ms. Henry is qualified to have an emotional support animal under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

The available data indicates that Ms. Henry's emotional distress substantially limits one or more major life activities and is imposed by her emotional distress as defined by the DSM-5.

Due to this emotional disability, Ms. Henry has certain limitations related to social interactions, coping with stress, and anxiety. In order to help alleviate these difficulties, and to enhance her ability to function independently, I am recommending an emotional support animal that will assist Ms. Henry in coping with her disability. Ms. Henry assumes all responsibility for the training, safety, cleanliness, health and conduct of her animal at all times.

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Weight Range:</u>	<u>Breed:</u>	<u>Name of Animal:</u>
Dog	1 to 10 lbs.	Chihuahua (Smooth)	Tito

I am licensed in the State of Michigan 4301500227.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Powell, MD

License Issued Date: 6/13/19

Michael Contreras, M.S., LPC-S, LCDC

2217 Martin Dr. #200

Bedford, TX 76021

Office:817-537-2044

Fax:844-318-2753

Michael@thewholisticinstitute.com

Michigan License: 6401019264



05/25/2022

To Whom It May Concern:

[REDACTED] (DOB 08/26/2001) is a patient who is currently under my care and has been under my care since 05/20/2022 for the treatment of a handicap as defined in 24 CFR I 00.20 I and 42 USC sec. 3602. Since that date, I have seen/treated [REDACTED] for one time (5/25/3022) for a total of two sessions and have gained first-hand knowledge of [REDACTED]'s handicap and the functional limitations caused by said handicap. I can affirmatively state that this handicap substantially limits one or more of [REDACTED]'s major life activities and specifically, the following major life activities: sleeping, focus, concentration and socialization.

Due to [REDACTED]'s handicap, I am prescribing an Emotional Support Animal ("Nova", 30 lbs, Rottweiler) to perform the following service/work: The ESA dog Nova assists with calming and grounding [REDACTED] so that anxiety symptoms are lessened. Nova also assists with enhancing motivation and helping her keep to a routine. This assistance will serve to ameliorate the symptoms experienced due to handicap. Accordingly, it is my opinion that there is a sufficient relationship between the support that the Emotional Support Animal will provide and [REDACTED]'s specific handicap. I anticipate the duration of this handicap to be approximately one year. Ms. [REDACTED] will need to be re-evaluated at that time.

I further understand that I may be called to testify about this matter as an expert witness and will answer any questions regarding my opinion that (Patient's name) has an Emotional Support Animal or my qualification to formulate such an opinion.

Sincerely,

Michael Contreras, Psy.D., M.S., LPC-S, LCDC

MI LPC (6401019264) since 2021

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor and a U.S. Department of Transportation Substance Abuse Professional. I provide counseling services in both English and Spanish. I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree from The University of Texas at Dallas and my Master of Science Degree from The University of the Southwest.

Find out more at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/michael-contreras-bedford-tx/296246>

Maria West

bijou1941@gmail.com

My friend Heather Gruno got an ESA letter from you. How much charge? Thank you

From: "Mail6.enguard.com" <michael@thewholisticinstitute.com>

Date: May 26, 2022 at 1:22:35 PM EDT

To: bijou1941@gmail.com

Subject: ESA

The fee for the ESA letter is \$154. I will also provide to you a free PSA travel letter version so you can take your animal on planes. If you have any housing forms to complete you can email them to me and I will complete those as well. The letter is only good for a year and I will provide your renewal for both letters for \$109 next year. Housing form completion will be \$35 next year if you need it. I also issue \$15 referral fees to you if you refer any friends or family. I can either send you the cash or you can apply it to your renewal paperwork fees next year. If you refer enough people I will eventually do your paperwork for free. Call me at 817-875-5845 if you would like to get your animal registered.

Sent from my iPhone

Anne Venet, MA LLPC
208336 Hall Road #226
Clinton Township, MI 48038
Telephone 586-371-9610
annemvenet@gmail.com

Michigan License #6401008217



02/02/2018

To Whom It May Concern:

75xwbyym

Ann Hyman (DOB: 07/16/2017); has been evaluated by me. I am familiar with the client's history and limitations imposed by the client's disability.

Ann Hyman has been diagnosed with a Differential Illness under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Differential Illness meets the definition of a disability under the Americans With Disability Act, The Fair Housing Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, § 504. In order to reduce the impairment associated with the disability and enhance the ability to live independently and fully use and enjoy a dwelling, or reduce impairment associated with this diagnosed disability and flying, I am endorsing emotional support animals. The emotional support animals will have a substantial impact in helping Ann cope with symptoms of the disability.

Reasonable accommodation should be given to Ann such that Ann should be allowed to live with the animals in a dwelling. Also, please allow Ann to be accompanied by the emotional support animals in the cabin of the aircraft in accordance with the Air Carrier Access Act (49 U.S.C. 41705 and 14 C.F.R. 382). This letter meets the requirements under the Fair Housing Act (The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968)), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 394 (Sept. 26, 1973), codified at 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990)).

Sincerely,

Anne Venet, MA LLPC

I am licensed by the State of Michigan as a Limited License Professional Counselor since 2001. My license number is 6401008217.

The client is aware that it is their sole responsibility to ensure that the animals behave appropriately and comply with any applicable laws.