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DFEH Settles Transgender Discrimination Case Against Orange County Motel

Transgender customer allegedly harassed and denied service

Orange – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has reached a settlement with Sky Palm Motel in Orange County in a gender identity discrimination case involving a transgender customer who alleged she was denied service and verbally harassed on the basis of her gender identity while attempting to rent a room.

In July 2017, the complainant filed a complaint for discrimination in public accommodations, alleging that Sky Palm Motel discriminated against her on the basis of her gender identity when its manager refused to rent her a room for the night. The complainant alleged that a front desk employee initially informed her that rooms were available, but that the motel manager refused her service and followed her to her car while shouting transphobic and homophobic slurs.

After DFEH found cause to believe a violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act had occurred, the parties engaged in mandatory mediation through the Department's Dispute Resolution Division, where the dispute was resolved.

"California law clearly prohibits business owners from harassing or discriminating against transgender and gender-non-conforming customers" said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. "We encourage anyone who experiences discrimination because of their gender identity or gender expression to contact us."

In addition to a monetary settlement, Sky Palm Motel will obtain cultural sensitivity training for its employees; develop and implement employee policies for equal treatment of all customers, including LGBTQ customers; and post DFEH posters at the motel to inform future guests of their right to equal accommodations.

Graduate Legal Assistant Jennifer Reynolds and Gregory J. Mann, Senior Staff Counsel, represented the DFEH in this proceeding.

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The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH's web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

