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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER ASSERTS FAIR HOUSING RIGHTS OF FAMILIES IN LA COUNTY IN NEW LAWSUIT AGAINST WESTCHESTER LANDLORD

[LOS ANGELES, CA - NOVEMBER 4, 2020] — The Housing Rights Center (HRC) filed a lawsuit today on behalf of a family alleging that they were denied a housing opportunity based on their familial status.

HRC filed the lawsuit in federal district court on behalf of Kicker and Teresa Vencill, the parents of two minor children, against property owner and manager Jane Welther for discrimination based on familial status. Ms. Welther is also a partner in a partnership that owns Costa Brava Apartments, a 90-unit apartment complex located in Westchester, California.

The complaint alleges that the Vencills lived in a two-bedroom apartment at 7838 W. Manchester Avenue in Playa Del Rey. In 2017, after their children were born, the Vencills wanted to move into a larger home and attempted to apply for an available three-bedroom apartment in the same building. Over the next 10 months, Ms. Welther refused to provide an application or show the unit, imposed an unlawful occupancy surcharge, and took several other steps to delay and discourage the Vencills' application. These actions served to deny housing to the Vencills based on their familial status.

The plaintiffs first contacted HRC through its Housing Rights Hotline to complain of familial status discrimination. After evaluating the complaint, HRC conducted an investigation including the use of fair housing testing which provided strong evidence of familial status discrimination.

“This is a case where a two-parent household who had the means to move into a larger unit in their same building were still denied the housing. It’s unacceptable and illegal for housing providers to treat households differently based on their familial status,” said HRC Executive Director Chancela Al-Mansour. “Families with children must have equal access to housing opportunities. We as a society fail when families and children are denied homes.”

“Discrimination, in any form, is just wrong. We are appreciative of the Housing Rights Center for listening to our claim, completing their own investigation and for helping us take a stand. We feel confident that our efforts will result in preventing other families from suffering the way we have,” said Teresa Vencill.

Discrimination based on familial status is prohibited under the Fair Housing Act and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act. Households with minors are protected from differential treatment and other prohibited practices that would restrict their housing choice based on their membership in a protected class.

The Housing Rights Center is the nation’s largest non-profit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting housing discrimination. If you feel that you have been a victim of housing discrimination, call HRC’s Housing Rights Hotline at 1-800-477-5977 (TTY: 1-213-201-0867).

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The Housing Rights Center is a non-profit organization established in 1968 to actively support and promote equal opportunity and freedom of residence to all persons without regard to their race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, familial status, disability, marital status, ancestry, age, source of income, or other characteristics protected by law. The Center engages in activities – including outreach/education, investigation/testing and legal advocacy – to identify barriers to fair housing in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties and to help counteract and eliminate discriminatory housing practices.