



HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER

WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN HOUSING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER SETTLES LANDMARK SECTION 8 VOUCHER HOLDER DISCRIMINATION CASE IN LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES, CA – OCTOBER 27, 2023 — The Housing Rights Center (HRC) successfully settled a landmark source of income discrimination case in the Los Angeles area on behalf of Plaintiff Rhina Tejada, a 78-year-old tenant in the Los Angeles area who suffered discrimination when her landlord unlawfully refused to accept her Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. As a part of the settlement agreement, the Defendants, Vision Property Investment LLC and its CEO, Lea Rosenfield, agreed to pay \$147,000 in damages and attorney’s fees.

Ms. Tejada, a 78-year-old individual on a fixed income, had lived in her Los Angeles apartment for twenty-two years. In fall 2019, after waiting for many years, she finally received a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher to subsidize her rent. When Ms. Tejada attempted to use a Housing Choice Voucher for her residency, her landlord refused to accept it. Ms. Tejada informed the landlord that this practice was illegal under source of income laws, yet the landlord still refused to complete forms and sign documents necessary for Ms. Tejada to use her voucher, ultimately delaying Ms. Tejada’s voucher acceptance for over a year. Further investigation by HRC demonstrated additional discriminatory practices against Section 8 voucher recipients, including advertising “No Section 8” on their housing listings. The Housing Rights Center and Ms. Tejada subsequently filed a lawsuit against the landlord in December 2021.

Housing Rights Center’s Executive Director, Chancela Al-Mansour, stated: “We hope this case makes it absolutely clear—it is illegal to deny a Section 8 or government subsidy for housing in Los Angeles and in the entire state of California. Landlords who refuse Section 8 are liable not only for extra costs incurred by tenants due to unlawful delays but also for the emotional harm and distress caused by their discriminatory acts.”

Although local ordinances protecting voucher recipients from discrimination have been in place in the city of Los Angeles since 2019, statewide protections under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (“FEHA”) went into effect in January 2020. These laws protect against source of



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income discrimination and explicitly prohibit discrimination against Section 8 voucher recipients. Prohibited practices under source of income laws include outright refusal of housing choice vouchers, advertising “No Section 8,” and delaying paperwork and inspections required in the approval process.

As part of the settlement agreement, the Defendants agreed to adopt a written Section 8 policy complying with fair housing laws, attend fair housing training, state in all future rental advertisements that the property accepts Section 8, and to place all future vacancies for the next three years on www.affordablehousing.com.

The Housing Rights Center is the nation's largest non-profit civil rights organization dedicated to securing and promoting fair housing. If you believe you have experienced discrimination based on source of income or any other protected class under federal or California law, please contact the Housing Rights Center at **1-800-477-5977** (TTY: 1-213-201-0867) or info@housingrightscenter.org.

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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. HRC engages in activities including outreach and education, testing and investigation, and legal advocacy to identify barriers to fair housing and to counteract and eliminate discriminatory housing practices in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.