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**HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER AND MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES
RESOLVE A CASE OF DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN LOS ANGELES**

LOS ANGELES, CA – MAY 25, 2022 — The owner and property manager of an apartment in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles have agreed to resolve a lawsuit involving claims of discrimination filed by the Housing Rights Center (HRC) and Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS) on behalf of a tenant with mental health disabilities who needs an assistance animal. The defendants agreed to adopt policies and practices that will enhance equal opportunities in housing for persons with disabilities, including adopting a written policy addressing reasonable accommodation and modification requests and attending comprehensive fair housing training.

The plaintiff brought suit in federal court in the fall of 2020 for discrimination on the basis of disability. After the plaintiff experienced debilitating symptoms of multiple severe disabilities, her doctor prescribed an assistance animal to aid in the mitigation of her symptoms, maintain her independence of living, and support her continued use and enjoyment of her housing. The plaintiff, and HRC on her behalf, made several requests to the owner and property manager of the apartment building to allow her to have the assistance animal as a reasonable accommodation of her disability.

Rodney Leggett, Staff Attorney at HRC, commented, “It is unacceptable and illegal for housing providers to discriminate against tenants with mental health disabilities. Landlords have a legal and moral responsibility to engage in a good faith interactive process to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to housing opportunities.”

Naomi Sultan, Supervising Attorney at MHAS, stated, “It is well established that landlords must provide reasonable accommodations for people with mental health disabilities who need emotional support animals. Refusing to permit emotional support animals and retaliating against tenants who request them is an illegal and unsustainable business practice.”

Ultimately, HRC and MHAS negotiated on the plaintiff’s behalf with the defendants for a successful resolution. The defendants agreed to pay the plaintiff \$120,000 for damages, litigation costs, and attorneys’ fees. The defendants have also agreed to adopt a written policy addressing reasonable accommodation and modification requests, comprehensive fair housing training focused on providing equal access to persons who have disabilities, to place and maintain English and Spanish versions of the HUD fair housing poster at the apartment building, and to



ensure that all advertisements for rentals comply with HUD's fair housing advertisement guidelines.

The plaintiff was represented by Rodney Leggett, Zachary Frederick, and Javier Beltran of HRC, the nation's largest nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to securing and promoting fair housing; and Naomi Sultan and Ilana Lohr-Schmidt of MHAS, a nonprofit organization established in 1977 to provide free legal services to people with mental disabilities.

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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.

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