



## Civil Rights Department

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CRD Files First Lawsuit to Enforce Protections For Housing Choice Voucher Holders**

*Lawsuit alleges Sacramento landlords engaged in hate violence, discrimination, and retaliation based on "Section 8" source of income, race, and disability*

**Sacramento** - The Civil Rights Department (CRD) has filed a lawsuit against two Sacramento landlords, Carlos and Linda Torres, for unlawfully discriminating against a tenant based on the tenant's source of income and race, and for retaliating, harassing, and threatening violence when the tenant attempted to assert her rights.

The suit alleges the landlords served the tenant with an eviction notice stating they no longer wanted to rent to federal Housing Choice (Section 8) voucher holders, after the tenant informed them she would no longer continue to make side payments that were inconsistent with the requirements of the voucher program. When she told the landlords that it is unlawful to refuse to rent to tenants because of their source of income, they harassed and retaliated against her, threatened to evict her by illegal means, threatened violence, and unlawfully locked her out of her home. As a result, she was unable to access essential belongings including medical equipment, family heirlooms, and photographs. The tenant was also unable to fully access and enjoy the property because of the landlords' repeated denials of her request for reasonable modification to accommodate her disability.

"Throughout the State, rental housing costs are climbing further out of reach for many Californians," said CRD Director Kevin Kish. "Source-of-income discrimination by housing providers exacerbates this trend and is unlawful. No one should be threatened for asserting their rights to be free from housing discrimination, regardless of race, disability, or the lawful source of income they use to pay their rent."

The suit, filed in Sacramento County Superior Court (case number 34-2022-00331695), alleges violations of the Ralph Civil Rights Act, the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), and the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Together, these laws prohibit housing discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and violence based on protected characteristics including race, color, source of income, and disability.

CRD is seeking statutory, compensatory, and punitive damages for the tenant who complained about the policy, as well as injunctive relief.

In, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 329 (Mitchell) into law, expanding the definition of "source of income" in the FEHA to include tenants who rely on rental assistance payments, including through the "Section 8" Housing Choice voucher program. The law protects the approximately 300,000 low-income Californians who rely on rental assistance payments through voucher programs to secure stable housing. Since the law went into effect in 2020, CRD has provided informational webinars and

materials to help landlords and tenants understand their rights and obligations under the law, reviewed thousands of housing advertisements to remove unlawful statements such as “No Section 8,” launched a fair housing testing program [finding widespread discrimination](#) against “Section 8” voucher holders, and resolved dozens of source-of-income complaints. This is the first lawsuit filed by the State to enforce the law’s protections in court.

The case is brought by Senior FEH Counsel Azadeh Hosseinian.

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*The CRD is the state agency charged with enforcing California’s civil rights laws. The mission of the CRD 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 CRD’s website at [calcivilrights.ca.gov](http://calcivilrights.ca.gov).*

