



Civil Rights Department

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April 2, 2024

For Immediate Release

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916-938-4113

Civil Rights Department Reaches Settlement Ending Novato Apartment Complex Ban on Section 8 Vouchers

Under California law, housing providers cannot refuse to rent to people based on their use of housing assistance programs

SACRAMENTO – During National Fair Housing Month, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced reaching a \$35,000 settlement ending a Novato apartment complex's alleged blanket ban on renting to people using Section 8 housing vouchers. Under California law, landlords and housing providers cannot refuse to rent to people based on their use of housing assistance programs, such as Section 8. In addition to monetary compensation, the settlement requires the property owner and management staff to take proactive steps to prevent future discrimination, including through training, policy changes, and requirements to post apartment vacancies on forums that serve individuals receiving housing assistance.

"Rental assistance programs can't help with housing insecurity if landlords won't accept applicants who use them," **said Civil Rights Department Director Kevin Kish**. "It is unlawful to reject renters simply for relying on Section 8. Whether it's Fair Housing Month or any time of the year, our office is always working to protect the rights of our state's residents. This settlement is just one more clear example of what we can achieve when we work together to identify and combat discrimination."

In 2023, CRD received a complaint from Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California alleging that a Novato apartment complex had an unlawful policy of refusing to rent to individuals using housing assistance programs. The complaint was the result of testing by Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California that identified multiple instances over a period of nearly two years of discriminatory practices. Specifically, the apartment complex's management allegedly indicated to fair housing testers who posed as prospective tenants that it would not rent to people using Section 8. Under state and federal law, nonprofit fair housing organizations may be authorized to carry out fair housing testing — including by posing as an individual in need of housing — to help identify and eliminate discriminatory practices. Pursuant to its statutory authority, CRD investigated the complaint and ultimately helped the parties reach a resolution through mediation. Over the last three years, CRD has secured nearly 150 settlements related to source of income discrimination in housing on behalf of impacted Californians.

As part of the settlement, the apartment complex's owner and property management have agreed to take a range of corrective actions, including to:

- End the apartment complex's unlawful blanket ban on renting to individuals using Section 8 housing vouchers or other rental assistance programs.
- Establish and distribute to staff a written policy requiring equal treatment of applicants regardless of their source of income.
- Require staff and management to complete fair housing training.
- Advertise each apartment vacancy on forums that serve individuals using housing assistance, including the Marin Housing Authority website.
- Post and make available copies of CRD's fair housing factsheet in both English and Spanish in rental offices and common areas.
- Pay \$35,000 to Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California, a nonprofit fair housing organization.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its complaint process. General information about CRD's complaint process and how to file a complaint is available [here](#). General information regarding California's protections against discrimination in housing is available [here](#). Information on source of income discrimination is available [here](#).

The settlement announced today was mediated by Senior Attorney Mediator Bruce W. Carter and supported by Associate Chief Counsel Azadeh Hosseinian and Staff Counsel Dagmawi Teshale.

A copy of the settlement is available [here](#).

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

