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Civil Rights Department Sues Southern California Landlord for Effectively Forcing Tenant Out After Switch to Section 8

Lawsuit aims to prevent future unlawful refusals to accept Section 8 vouchers and secure financial compensation for tenant who was forced out of her home

SACRAMENTO – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced filing a lawsuit against a Southern California landlord over allegations that a long-term tenant was effectively forced out of her apartment after she began to participate in Section 8, a federal housing assistance program for low-income households. Under California law, landlords and housing providers cannot refuse to rent to someone based on their participation in housing assistance programs.

“Across the country, millions of people rely on programs like Section 8 to stay in their homes,” said **CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “Whether they need it because they’ve fallen on hard times or to keep up with rising costs, housing assistance gives everyday Americans a chance to thrive. There is no excuse for effectively kicking someone out for using Section 8, particularly when they’ve already shown they’re a reliable tenant. It’s against the law, it’s immoral, and we’re committed to doing our part to help protect our state’s residents.”

Long-Term Tenant Forced Out for Using Section 8

In 2023, CRD received a complaint against a landlord in San Bernardino County for allegedly rejecting an existing renter’s request to start using Section 8. According to the lawsuit, she had already been living at the two-bedroom unit for several years when she reached out to her landlord in 2022 to ask about using a Section 8 voucher to help pay for her rent. She asked to make the switch after getting accepted to the Section 8 program and changes to her economic circumstances. However, the landlord allegedly repeatedly refused to accept the voucher, even after the renter got help from a local fair housing organization. The complainant alleges she was forced to move out in order to keep her voucher and find another place to live that would accept it.

State Steps In, Files Lawsuit to Combat Unlawful Housing Discrimination

After completing an investigation and attempting to resolve the matter through mediation, CRD is now suing the landlord — who owns dozens of rental units across California — to:

- Prevent any future unlawful refusals to accept Section 8 vouchers or support from other housing assistance programs.
- Require proactive action to address the landlord’s alleged illegal conduct.
- Secure financial compensation for the tenant who was unlawfully forced out of her home.

California Has a Range of Tools to Protect Renters

From securing a settlement against a Long Beach company for allegedly [penalizing victims of domestic violence](#) to a recent lawsuit against a Bakersfield landlord for allegedly [refusing to accept rental support from a homelessness rehousing program](#), CRD uses a range of tools to help protect renters from unlawful discrimination. In April, the department announced sending more than 60 compliance letters to [put a stop to unlawful advertisements](#) that attempt to screen potential tenants or job candidates out on the basis of protected categories, including the use of Section 8. The same month, CRD reached a \$35,000 settlement to [end a Marin County apartment complex’s alleged ban](#) on accepting funds from rental assistance programs. CRD also regularly conducts fair housing testing — or relies on testing by others — to [identify and prevent discrimination](#) in housing. In addition to making [numerous resources available online](#) for free, the department last year [launched a monthly “Civil Rights 101” webinar series](#) to support increased awareness of and compliance with the state’s civil rights protections.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public, including with respect to [source of income discrimination](#) in housing.

The lawsuit announced today is being litigated by Staff Counsel Nassim Moallem and Assistant Chief Counsel Nadia Aziz.

A copy of the lawsuit 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.

