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MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS AND CITY OF RICHMOND REACH SETTLEMENT IN DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT

Future code enforcement to be more responsive to vulnerable residents' needs; language access plan to help City residents access services.

Richmond, Virginia, May 10, 2016 – Thirty-three current and former mobile home park residents have reached a negotiated settlement to their housing discrimination lawsuit against the City of Richmond. The residents, represented *pro bono* by the Legal Aid Justice Center and the law firm of Crowell & Moring LLP, had alleged that an aggressive housing code enforcement campaign violated their civil rights. Under the terms of the settlement, the City of Richmond will institute policies that will help minimize the displacement of mobile home residents in future enforcement activities and will better serve residents who are not fluent in English.

“This settlement is a positive outcome for our clients and for all mobile home park residents in the City of Richmond,” said Marie Diveley, Crowell & Moring senior counsel. “The City has agreed to take important steps that will not only benefit vulnerable mobile home park residents, but will also ensure that limited English speakers can access City services without unnecessary language barriers.”

The suit, which was filed in federal court in Richmond last August, alleged that the City violated the civil rights of the residents by targeting mobile home parks, where residents are mainly Latino, for aggressive code enforcement with the expectation that scores of vulnerable families would likely be displaced. According to the lawsuit, the City also refused to provide adequate interpretation and translation services for the limited English proficient residents, in violation of federal civil rights laws.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement the City will: work with a non-profit partner organization to assist mobile home park residents in addressing maintenance code violations

prior to park-wide inspections; provide notices of code violations and appeal forms in Spanish to residents who are proficient in Spanish but not English; institute a language-access plan pursuant to federal civil rights guidelines and train City employees on their obligations under the plan; arrange for Fair Housing Act training for certain departments of City government; and provide modest monetary assistance to the plaintiffs, for repair or relocation, and to assist more generally with repairs in mobile home parks. With the agreement, the City also acknowledges that mobile homes play an important role in the affordable housing supply of Richmond.

“This settlement is the culmination of a long process of negotiation to address serious concerns on both sides,” according to Phil Storey, the Legal Aid Justice Center’s lead attorney on the case. “We are pleased that the City and the residents were able to reach a mutually agreeable resolution, thanks to assistance from Mark Rubin and VCU’s Center for Consensus Building.”

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The Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) fights injustice in the lives of individual Virginians while rooting out exploitative policies and practices that keep people in poverty. We use impact litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy to solve urgent problems in areas such as housing, education, civil rights, immigration, healthcare and consumer finance. Our primary service areas are Charlottesville, Northern Virginia and Richmond/Petersburg, but the effects of our work are felt statewide.

Crowell & Moring LLP is an international law firm with approximately 500 lawyers representing clients in litigation and arbitration, regulatory, and transactional matters. The firm is internationally recognized for its representation of Fortune 500 companies in high-stakes litigation, as well as its ongoing commitment to *pro bono* service and diversity. The firm has offices in Washington, DC, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orange County, Anchorage, London, and Brussels. For more information, visit www.crowell.com.

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