

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 28, 2016

Contact: Phil Storey

Tel: 804-521-7306

Cell: 434-284-0872

Email: phil@justice4all.org

AGREEMENT SETTLES ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT AGAINST CITY OF RICHMOND ALLEGING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

Settlement requires reforms to Richmond’s maintenance code enforcement, fair housing practices, and services to limited English proficient residents.

Richmond, Virginia, July 28, 2016 – A civil rights complaint filed last year with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) by Latino mobile home park residents against the city of Richmond was resolved last week by agreement between HUD and the parties. The agreement ends a year-long investigation by HUD into allegations that Richmond unfairly targeted the largely Latino-occupied mobile home communities for unprecedented, intensive maintenance code enforcement and that the city refused to offer interpretation or translation as required by federal law. Under the agreement, Richmond will pay \$30,000 in damages to the complainants and will take numerous steps to ensure future compliance with the federal Fair Housing Act, to provide meaningful access to city services in Spanish and other languages, and to provide assistance to mobile home park residents affected by its code enforcement activities.

“We are very pleased with this resolution to the HUD complaint,” according to Phil Storey, attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center in Richmond, who represented the residents along with the law firm of Crowell & Moring in Washington, D.C. “The agreement has teeth, so we are confident that it will make a real difference in the way the city deals with mobile home park residents, immigrants, and other minorities going forward in terms of fair housing rights and language access.”

The agreement will remain in force for four years, during which the city of Richmond will be subject to HUD oversight and must submit regular compliance reports to the agency. Some of Richmond’s obligations under the agreement include: performing a new analysis of impediments to fair-housing choice and ensuring that its use of funding from HUD addresses those impediments, including in mobile home parks; regularly training the staff of key departments to protect fair-housing rights and to provide interpretation and translation services to city residents free of charge; posting notices in city offices informing people of the availability of free interpretation upon request; ensuring that city websites and telephone voice response systems are available in Spanish as well as English; appointing a Fair Housing Compliance Officer and a Language Access Coordinator, who will oversee and report regularly to HUD on the city’s compliance with the terms of the agreement.

“The reach of the HUD agreement is very good for the residents of mobile home parks, but also for immigrants and other vulnerable people throughout Richmond,” says Cliff Zatz, partner with Crowell & Moring, which provided *pro bono* representation on the case. “This is a good example of how federal agencies like HUD work to protect people’s civil rights.”

A copy of the agreement can be downloaded from www.justice4all.org. (Or directly at <http://tinyurl.com/HUD-RVA-Agreement>.)

...

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.

###