Housing Works Announces Suit Against Goldfarb Associates for Housing Descrimination

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Housing Works is a healing community of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Our mission is to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS through relentless advocacy, the provision of lifesaving services, and entrepreneurial businesses that sustain our efforts.

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Armen H. Merjian, Senior Staff Attorney at Housing Works, who filed the lawsuit against major real estate company Goldfarb Associates, speaking to the crowd of activists gathered for the press conference at City Hall.

Lawsuit alleges blatant refusal to accept applicants living with AIDS and utilizing a public housing subsidy New York City--Today, a client of the New York City HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) filed a lawsuit against Goldfarb Associates, a major real estate company, alleging housing discrimination that is prohibited by the New York City Human Rights Law. The lawsuit, Goode v. Goldfarb Associates, Inc., alleges that the defendant blatantly refused to rent to the plaintiff after the plaintiff revealed that he was a client of HASA, i.e., the recipient of a public subsidy who is living with symptomatic HIV illness or AIDS. In fact, the plaintiff says, Goldfarb informed him that Goldfarb does not accept applications from HASA clients as a matter of policy. New York City's Fair Housing Justice Center, utilizing trained "testers," conducted an investigation that corroborated the plaintiff's account of this discrimination.

HASA provides tens of thousands of New Yorkers living with AIDS with a housing subsidy to assist them in securing accommodations in order to avoid homelessness and the mortal threat that unstable housing poses, particularly for the immuno-compromised. In 2008, the City Council passed Local Law 10, prohibiting landlords and their agents from discriminating based on a prospective tenant's lawful source of income, such as a HASA rent subsidy.

"I felt dehumanized, devalued, and embarrassed," said the plaintiff Goode, "and made it hard to continue to search for housing, because I felt like I was unworthy of housing and discouraged from trying."

"Housing is healthcare for people living with AIDS," said Armen H. Merjian, Senior Staff Attorney at Housing Works, attorney for Mr. Goode and one of the nation's leading HIV/AIDS and civil rights

attorneys. “It is hard enough for HASA clients to find affordable housing in this increasingly gentrified city, but when landlords and agents discriminate against them on the basis of their HASA subsidy, that search becomes nearly impossible.”

The plaintiff seeks compensatory and punitive damages, along with an injunction prohibiting the defendant from discriminating on the basis of lawful source of income. The plaintiff also seeks to require the defendant, among other things, to undergo fair housing training and to adopt and post non-discrimination policies. The suit was filed in Brooklyn Supreme Court.

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