



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday August 27, 2010**

**LAWSUIT ALLEGES WIDESPREAD ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST SECTION 8 VOUCHER HOLDERS IN NYC**

Yesterday, the Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC) and the law firm Giskan Solotaroff Anderson & Stewart LLP announced the filing of a source of income discrimination lawsuit in state court on behalf of Paul Solomons, a 44 year old man who relies on Social Security Disability benefits and receives a Section 8 voucher. The lawsuit alleges that more than 20 property owners and brokers in New York City discriminated against Mr. Solomons by refusing to rent, negotiate with him, or show him available apartments because of his Section 8 voucher. Section 8 vouchers are federal rental subsidies which guarantee landlords timely payments of rent while ensuring that voucher holders pay about a third of their income toward housing. Under the New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), Section 8 vouchers are a lawful source of income.

For over four months, the FHJC conducted investigations into the defendants' practices and discovered a clear pattern: people seeking housing who rely on Section 8 vouchers were turned away even though their vouchers could cover the rent, but people with other sources of income were not turned away. Denying rental housing or broker services to a person because of their lawful source of income violates the NYCHRL. The defendants include: Prudential Douglas Elliman, City Connections Realty, Inc., AIM Realty Services Inc., Best Apartments, Inc., Best Apartments North, Inc., City Sites New York, Elipark Realty Corp., 23 Manhattan Valley North LLC, 650 West 189 Limited Partnership and other property and real estate business owners and employees.

The suit seeks an injunction to stop the discrimination, and relief to prevent future discriminatory acts, including training employees about the local fair housing law.

Attorney Amanda Masters commented, "This bias persists even though the law has been very clear since March of 2008. In 2010, brokers are warned on the craigslist.org and *New York Times* websites when they post ads that they cannot discriminate against prospective tenants based on their lawful sources of income, and yet they continue to do business with landlords who openly refuse to accept Section 8 vouchers or other programs. Mr. Solomons hopes that his suit will not only finally get him into an apartment, but also change the policies of brokers and landlords so that others will not be discriminated against."

Additionally, FHJC Executive Director, Susan Kurien stated, "Shelter is a fundamental human need; we all require protection from the elements and deserve equal access to this protection. Vouchers allow many lower income New Yorkers, especially the elderly and persons with disabilities, access to decent and affordable housing. This case demonstrates there is still widespread noncompliance with the City's source of income law. Hopefully, this case will serve as a reminder to other housing providers and brokers that there are serious ramifications for not complying with this law."

The mission of the FHJC is to challenge systemic housing discrimination, promote open and inclusive communities, and strengthen fair housing enforcement. The FHJC assists individuals who encounter illegal housing discrimination by providing counseling on fair housing rights, investigative assistance (including testing), and referrals to administrative agencies and cooperating attorneys. Persons who encounter illegal housing discrimination are encouraged to call the FHJC at (212) 400-8201.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amanda Masters, Esq.
Giskan Solotaroff Anderson & Stewart LLP
11 Broadway, Suite 2150
New York, NY 10004
646-708-9004
amasters@gslawny.com