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## SOURCE OF INCOME DISCRIMINATION BY REAL ESTATE BROKERS LINKED TO HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK CITY

The Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc. (FHJC) issued a report today that details the results of a month long investigation into source of income discrimination by area real estate companies. FHJC conducted this investigation because New York City amended its Human Rights Law in March 2008 to add protection for tenants who face discrimination based on a lawful source of income including a rental subsidy.

The report, entitled *No License to Discriminate*, describes how the FHJC monitored rental advertisements posted on a popular website, [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org), during the month of July 2008. On one day, over 1500 rental advertisements were identified as explicitly making housing unavailable to tenants with rental subsidies or income from sources other than employment. The ads included explicit phrases such as “No Section 8,” “No Programs,” or “No Government Programs.” Many of these ads were placed by real estate brokers and salespersons licensed by the State of New York.

During July 2008, the FHJC found the following rental advertising practices:

- 363 advertisements for 413 rental units were posted with discriminatory restrictions based on source of income
- 161 real estate companies were responsible for posting the 363 discriminatory ads
- 78% of the 413 rental units were located in Brooklyn and the Bronx
- 76% of the 413 rental units involved rental housing priced at \$1600 or less
- 64% of the 413 rental units contained two or more bedrooms

Housing discrimination based on source of income impairs mobility and restricts housing choice for many low- and moderate-income families. Such discrimination makes it more difficult for families coming out of homelessness to locate permanent housing and it puts many families at greater risk of becoming homeless. The report points out that, while New York City spends millions every year to address the problem of homelessness, the persistence of source of income discrimination undermines the City’s efforts to eliminate and prevent homelessness.

The report offers the following six recommendations:

- Recommendation #1: *New York City should be more pro-active in fair housing enforcement by supporting the implementation of systemic fair housing testing investigations.*
- Recommendation #2: *Fair housing enforcement agencies and organizations should notify the New York Department of State Division of Licensing Services when a real estate licensee is engaged in illegal housing discrimination based on source of income.*
- Recommendation #3: *Public enforcement agencies should seek comprehensive remedies to source of income housing discrimination.*
- Recommendation #4: *State of New York should establish standards that ensure training courses for real estate licensees include information on state and local fair housing laws.*
- Recommendation #5: *State of New York should eliminate current exemption from continuing education fair housing training requirements for real estate licensees in business for 15 or more years.*
- Recommendation #6: *State of New York should amend the State Human Rights Law to add lawful source of income as a protected characteristic.*

In addition to these recommendations, the FHJC turned over copies of all of the discriminatory advertisements along with the names of the real estate licensees who placed the ads on [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) to the following agencies:

- New York City Commission on Human Rights
- Civil Rights Bureau for the Office of the New York State Attorney General
- New York Department of State's Division of Licensing Services

A copy of this report can be downloaded from: [www.fairhousingjustice.org](http://www.fairhousingjustice.org).

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