



For Immediate Release

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Tenant Faces Disability Discrimination in Millbrae

A fair housing investigation at a 41-unit residential complex in Millbrae revealed patterns of discrimination against disabled, elderly tenants.

Project Sentinel's Fair Housing Center successfully resolved a disability housing discrimination complaint filed with the California Department of Fair Housing & Employment against the owner and managers of a 41-unit residential complex in Millbrae.

Project Sentinel was contacted by an elderly tenant facing eviction based on disability discrimination for help. After the tenant suffered a fall, for which she was hospitalized, she returned home to her regular routine with some support from a caregiver. After learning that she needed a part-time caregiver, the owner and property manager harassed her by telling her that they did not want the "liability" of her remaining in her home, threatening to call the County to have her "removed," ordering her to move out, and asking invasive questions about the extent of her disabilities. Feeling as though she had no other option, she moved out less than a month later, and the housing provider proceeded to unlawfully withhold a portion of her security deposit.

Project Sentinel investigated the housing provider's practices through testing, which compared the treatment afforded to equally qualified individuals with and without disabilities, when inquiring about housing opportunities. Testers calling for disabled relatives were told that the complex was for 'independent living' and people who 'can take care of themselves'. One property manager even told a tester that her relative would not be allowed to rent at the complex, and if her relative needed medical care, her relative should go to a board and care facility. Project Sentinel's investigation corroborated the tenant's allegations and revealed that the housing provider unlawfully discriminated against people with disabilities who relied on support from caregivers.

The housing provider violated both the Fair Housing Act and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, which state that it is illegal to deny a dwelling to any person, including refusing to rent or negotiate for rental, because of disability. In addition, a housing provider

cannot make the determination that a tenant is “unfit “to live independently or make unfounded generalizations about disabilities.

“Project Sentinel is pleased with the resolution to this case. We believe that the outcome of this case has sent a clear message to the housing provider that violating a tenant’s civil rights will not be tolerated and that there are consequences when such violations are brought forward,” remarked Ann Marquart, Executive Director of Project Sentinel. “This case is especially egregious in that the victim, an elderly resident of Millbrae, needed to rest and recuperate in her home but instead was subjected to hostile threats and intimidation. I am so pleased that our fair housing laws were enforced and that the complainant can now relax and enjoy her new home free from the harm caused by such discriminatory treatment.”

Project Sentinel negotiated a settlement which included recovery of \$18,500 in damages, mandatory fair housing training for the property’s staff members, creation of new lease materials that detail reasonable accommodation policies, and a commitment to place a notice that the housing provider is an “Equal Housing Opportunity Provider” in all future advertisements by the property.

Residents of San Mateo County are encouraged to contact Project Sentinel toll-free at (888) 324-7468 for assistance with any housing discrimination problems. Project Sentinel’s fair housing services, available in Spanish, Vietnamese and Mandarin, are free and provided regardless of income or immigration status.

Founded in 1976, Project Sentinel is a nonprofit agency that provides a wide range of housing services to home-seekers, housing providers, and community members. Project Sentinel’s Fair Housing Center is dedicated to ending housing discrimination through education, advocacy, investigation and enforcement of fair housing laws. The agency’s services span six Northern California counties, including Monterey, Sacramento, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Stanislaus and parts of Alameda County.

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