

April 15, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Affordable Housing Provider to Pay \$115,000 for Disability Discrimination at Philadelphia-Area Apartment Complexes

Fort Washington, PA -The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania (HECP) and a Delaware County resident have entered into an agreement resolving allegations that Presby's Inspired Life, Alician Senior Housing, and sixteen other apartment complexes in Bucks, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties violated the Fair Housing Act by discriminating against residents with disabilities.

In December 2018, HECP was contacted when a man residing at Alician Senior Housing in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, received a letter stating that his tenancy was being terminated due to minor lease violations that were a direct result of his disability-related symptoms. HECP submitted a reasonable accommodation request on his behalf, asking that any disability-related lease violations be waived, that he be permitted to continue to reside in his unit and that the complex provide the complainant and his caregivers with time to put into place additional services to prevent any further lease violations. Alician denied this request, reiterating that he would be required to vacate his unit and stating that his presence posed a health and safety concern for the other residents.

When attempts at education and resolution failed, HECP assisted the complainant with filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. HECP also began a systemic investigation of Presby's Inspired Life, documenting the unwillingness of not only Alician Senior Housing, but also sixteen other complexes managed by the company located throughout the Greater Philadelphia area, to permit reasonable accommodations for residents with disabilities.

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, known as the Fair Housing Act, makes it unlawful to discriminate in connection with any housing related transaction,

based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status. Housing providers are obligated under this law to permit reasonable accommodations, or changes in policies or practices, when necessary for residents with disabilities to use and enjoy their dwelling. Multiple courts have found that this obligation includes allowing tenants with disabilities the opportunity to mitigate any disability-related lease violations prior to evicting them. Disability has been a protected class under the Fair Housing Act since 1988.

“Threatening to evict a tenant due to symptoms of his disability is unconscionable and inhumane as well as a violation of state and federal fair housing laws,” said Rachel Wentworth, Executive Director of HECP. “Under the Fair Housing Act, people with disabilities may not be excluded from housing based on fear, speculation, or stereotypes about their disabilities. It is especially egregious for a mission-oriented provider of affordable housing for seniors to engage in this type of discriminatory conduct.”

Presby’s Inspired Life denied the allegations in this case but signed an agreement that will result in payments totaling \$115,000 in damages to the complainant and to HECP to cover a portion of the costs incurred to bring about the agreement and to provide future consumer education regarding the fair housing rights of persons with disabilities. The respondents agreed to make a personnel change that will place a different individual in the position of property manager for Alician Senior Apartments. Additionally, the respondents agreed to require all staff involved in the leasing of rental units to participate in a comprehensive fair housing training and to revise their policies to comply with the Fair Housing Act.

The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania has worked since 1956 to eliminate housing discrimination through education, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws. HECP’s work serves a population of over 4.65 million in the seven-county Philadelphia and Lehigh Valley regions. As the nation’s oldest fair housing agency, HECP’s successes include eradicating discriminatory practices at over 50,000 units of housing. HECP’s investigations are funded in part by the Fair Housing Initiatives Program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HECP and the individual complainant was represented in this matter by Abara Law Firm.

Anyone suspecting that they were denied housing for discriminatory reasons, or any housing provider who wants information on how they can operate their business in compliance with the Fair Housing Act should contact HECP at 267-419-8918 or visit www.equalhousing.org.