

## Housing Counseling Services and District Voucher Holder Resolve Source of Income Discrimination Complaint Through Court Enforced Agreement with Bozzuto Management Company

### *Bozzuto Makes it Easier for Tenants Using Housing Vouchers to Rent at its Properties*

**Washington – March 18, 2021:** Housing Counseling Services (HCS), a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive housing counseling to low-income individuals, and Robert Evans, a D.C. resident, have entered into a settlement agreement with Bozzuto Management Company. The agreement is designed to eliminate discriminatory barriers to housing for residents seeking rental housing using subsidies. It is important because it will make it easier for D.C. residents who use housing subsidies to secure housing opportunities in the District's tight housing market.

"This agreement will improve the lives of numerous D.C. residents every year. Because of Bozzuto's new tenant screening policy, low-income people with housing subsidies will face much less illegal discrimination in their housing searches and will have an easier time finding a safe place to live," said Lori Leibowitz, managing attorney of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program.

George Ruttinger, a partner at Crowell & Moring said: "Denying housing to voucher holders poses a major barrier to addressing the affordable housing crisis in the District. By this settlement, Bozzuto has committed to doing its part to remedy this problem at the properties that it manages. This is a welcome development that should set an example for other property owners and managers."

"I know that there are apartments in DC that don't take vouchers, and so I feel great about the agreement with Bozzuto," Evans said. "And, I feel great that through this agreement, Bozzuto is promising to treat voucher holders fairly."

The agreement resolves a complaint against Bozzuto that HCS and Evans filed in D.C. Superior Court in January 2020, which alleged that Evans was prevented from moving into a building previously managed by Bozzuto after Evans revealed that he intended to use a housing subsidy to pay for part of his rent.

The agreement provides that Bozzuto will:

- Charge tenants using income based subsidies the same rents as those who pay their rent without a subsidy;
- Not consider credit score when a prospective tenant will use an income based subsidy to pay rent;
- Not impose minimum income requirements on prospective tenants using an income-based subsidy to pay rent; and
- Provide fair housing training to its staff.

In addition, Bozzuto will make a monetary payment to HCS and Evans to cover costs, attorneys' fees, and damages. A copy of the original complaint is available [here](#).

HCS and Evans were represented in this matter by Crowell & Moring LLP, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs, and Neighborhood Legal Services Program.

“The use of vouchers to pay rent is critically important as working and low-income residents continue to face an affordable housing crisis in DC. The ability to use a rental subsidy to secure a safe and affordable rental apartment often means the difference between homelessness and the stability that accompanies safe shelter,” said Mirela Missova, counsel of the Washington Lawyers’ Committee.

HCS Executive Director Marian Siegel commented: “This agreement addresses important rights and offers supports to low income tenants using vouchers by ensuring equal access and reducing unnecessary burdens in securing housing. We are pleased that a great number of tenants will be more likely to access affordable homes as a result of these efforts.”

Individuals who believe they may have experienced illegal discrimination because they receive a housing subsidy in the Washington, D.C. area are encouraged to report their experiences to the Washington Lawyers’ Committee at 202-319-1000 or to Neighborhood Legal Services at 202-832-6577.

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