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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***Legal Aid Files Lawsuit on Behalf of Homeless Youth who Were
Illegally Denied Housing Based on their Source of Income***

***Litigation Seeks Temporary Restraining Order to Stop Landlord from
Renting Units Already Approved for Homeless Youth***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society [filed](#) a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of six prospective tenants, ages 20 to 25, all of whom are homeless or unstably housed, and Safe Horizon, Inc.’s Streetwork Project, a non-profit organization that assists homeless and unsheltered youth. The complaint was filed against landlords 3823 Carpenter Ave LLC and Aleksander Kalaj for illegally refusing to rent unoccupied new studio apartments at 3823 Carpenter Avenue in the Bronx on the basis of the prospective tenants’ source of income.

The prospective tenants qualify for the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program and each has a Section 8 voucher. Under the federal American Rescue Plan, EHV offers thousands of Section 8 vouchers to homeless and unstably housed New Yorkers, an unprecedented opportunity given that Section 8 waitlists have largely remained closed for many years.

In early December 2022, nine Streetwork Project clients were initially approved for an apartment in the newly-constructed building at 3823 Carpenter Ave. Soon after, the landlord reversed his approval. Upon investigation, Streetwork Project learned that the building lacked a Certificate of Occupancy (CO), without which a landlord cannot legally rent an apartment. The lawsuit alleges that because the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) would not approve Section 8 rentals in a building without a CO, the landlord pulled out of the deal.

The lawsuit seeks a temporary restraining order to stop the landlord from renting the vacant units to other tenants – relief already required by state law that prohibits the landlord from renting units without a CO.

The lawsuit also includes a non-emergency request of NYCHA that Streetwork clients have their Section 8 vouchers extended past the 300-day search period, especially because the landlord will likely need additional time to obtain a CO.

“Source of income discrimination takes many forms, including refusing to complete paperwork required of a program or declining to rent an apartment to a person with a voucher because the unit would never pass

inspection,” said **Stephanie Rudolph, staff attorney at The Legal Aid Society**. “Source of income discrimination – no matter the form – exacerbates an already overburdened shelter system and causes irreparable and long-lasting harm. Our clients have a finite time period to rent an apartment using their vouchers without which they miss the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stabilize their lives.”

This litigation is funded by the citywide **Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP) Program**, which has served over 75,000 New York City tenants. AHTP is a crucial program that protects thousands of low-income tenants, largely from communities of color, across the City against landlord harassment, discrimination, and displacement.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org