

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Housing Rights Initiative Scores Major Victory in Federal Fair Housing Lawsuit**

*Defendants' motions to dismiss denied by judge*

**New York** — Motions to dismiss by defendants in one of the largest fair housing lawsuits in American history, initially against 88 real estate companies, have been denied by a federal judge.

In 2021, the housing watchdog group, Housing Rights Initiative (HRI), generated a lawsuit against 88 real estate companies (dozens of whom have resolved the claims against them since then), filed by **Handley Farah & Anderson PLLC** and **The Legal Aid Society**. These defendants include brokers and landlords who were caught discriminating against Housing Rights Initiative's undercover investigators posing as Section 8 voucher holders. Defendants included some of the largest real estate companies in New York City, like Corcoran Group.

This week, Judge Sidney H. Stein resoundingly denied these motions to dismiss and reaffirmed that Housing Rights Initiative does in fact possess legal and organizational standing to file these cases.

This ruling comes on the heels of another victory by Housing Rights Initiative, where a New York State Supreme Court judge denied a motion to dismiss in a fair housing lawsuit against 124 brokers and landlords for discriminating against CityFHEPS voucher holders.

“Let this decision send a clear and loud message to all of real estate that if you are illegally discriminating against low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled, the question of whether you will be caught is not a matter of if, but when,” said **Aaron Carr, Founder and Executive Director of the housing watchdog group, Housing Rights Initiative**.

Matthew Handley of Handley Farah & Anderson PLLC added, “This decision upholds decades of fair housing cases granting organizations such as HRI the right to enforce federal and local fair housing laws. Without HRI's investigation and efforts to combat this unlawful discrimination, too many members of the real estate industry would be able to flout these laws, deny voucher holders a safe and affordable place to live, and further aggravate the ongoing affordable housing crisis. This lawsuit aims to stop these practices.”

“Source of income discrimination is illegal, and it acutely impacts vulnerable families who are in desperate need of housing,” said **Robert Desir, staff attorney in the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “This unlawful and unethical practice contributes to New York's unprecedented housing and homelessness crises, and it must be eradicated. Today's ruling is a positive step forward, and we will continue to hold bad actors accountable who flout the law and deprive our clients of the homes that they are legally entitled to.”

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**About Housing Rights Initiative** - *Housing Rights Initiative takes a proactive and systematic approach to targeting, investigating, and fighting fraudulent real estate practices, promoting fair housing, and connecting tenants to legal support. HRI's data-driven model identifies properties where there is a high probability of systematic fraud and discrimination. We educate and counsel tenants about their rights to fair and affordable housing and launch investigations against predatory real estate companies.*

*Through a legal mobilization effort, HRI lays the foundation for tenants who have been defrauded or discriminated against by the real estate industry, to seek redress and secure their rights under the law.*

*HRI's successful investigations into and class action lawsuits against Kushner Companies were recently featured in the Netflix documentary Dirty Money. [www.housingrightsUS.org](http://www.housingrightsUS.org)*

**About Handley Farah & Anderson PLLC** - *Handley Farah & Anderson are lawyers who seek to improve the world. Based in Washington, D.C., they fight for: workers deprived of wages, consumers deceived about products, tenants denied access to housing, farmers mistreated by processors, parents deprived of adequate parental leave, investors who were defrauded, small businesses harmed by antitrust violations, persons with disabilities denied access, whistleblowers who uncover fraud, and women and communities of color subject to discrimination.*

**About The Legal Aid Society** - *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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)