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FHF and Attorney Michelle Uzeta Resolved a Case of Disability Discrimination.

Bellflower, CA- The client had moved into the complaint property on or around November 16, 2021 and had contacted the Fair Housing Foundation (FHF) in April 2022 to seek advice on their fair housing rights regarding disability discrimination and assistance with a reasonable accommodation request. The client did not know how to approach the property manager to make them aware of her need for an assistance animal to aid in the mitigation of her symptoms as prescribed by a health care provider. Initially, the client had not moved in with her cat as she had been homeless, and the assistance animal was temporarily with the client's daughter. After a month of residence, the client was then able to move the cat in with her at the property. After five months of living at the property, the client was then issued a notice to remove the "unauthorized pet" from the premises. The client was then able to notify the property manager that the cat was an assistance animal meant to ameliorate the client's disability differentiating that animal from a service animal and pet. Despite having provided the property manager with supporting documents, the client was issued a 90-Day Notice of Termination of Tenancy.

FHF was then able to get involved to assist in communication with the property manager on behalf of the client. The legal counsel representing the apartment complex/owner informed FHF that the 60-Day Notice of Termination of Tenancy would not be rescinded on the basis that the notice of an assistance animal was a breach of the rental agreement/ application and could constitute fraud since it was not disclosed upon leasing the apartment. By taking this response, the landlords and their counsel also failed to engage in the "interactive process," or good-faith dialogue with the client's disability-related need for the accommodation.

Therefore, FHF was able to obtain the assistance from Ms. Michelle Uzeta, a civil rights attorney to advocate on behalf of the client. Ms. Uzeta was able to submit a letter to the landlord's legal counsel informing them of the client's rights to her assistance animal as protected by the law. A successful resolution was then reached where the client's 90-Day Notice of Termination of Tenancy was rescinded, and her residence would continue in the current apartment with her assistance animal. Both FHF and the client are grateful to the assistance and advocacy of Ms. Uzeta in resolving this matter.

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The Fair Housing Foundation is a non-profit organization established in 1964 and is dedicated to eliminating discrimination in housing and promoting equal access to housing choices for everyone. FHF engages in activities

including outreach and education, testing and investigation, and counteracting and eliminating discriminatory housing practices in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The Fair Housing Foundation is a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency and also offers Rental Counseling. Please contact Fair Housing Foundation at 1-800-446-3247 (TTY: 1-800 855-7100) for more information.