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**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Opens Investigation
into Displacement, Poor Conditions, and Discrimination at Virginia’s First Privatized
Public Housing Community.**

Hopewell, Va., March 9, 2017—In response to complaints filed on behalf of eight current and former public housing residents, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has opened an investigation into discrimination and other program violations at Virginia’s first Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) conversion. Under the RAD program, Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) and Community Housing Partners (CHP) razed the public housing community Langston Park in 2014 and built new apartments on the site, now called the Summit at Hopewell. The complaints allege HRHA and CHP discriminated against both families with children and residents with disabilities; pushed tenants out of Langston Park, depriving them of their legal right to return to the redeveloped Summit at Hopewell; and relocated other tenants to severely overcrowded housing in poor condition.

The complaints to HUD describe multiple violations of residents’ civil rights under the federal Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. They also allege violations of protections of the federal Uniform Relocation Act for relocated residents, and of RAD program requirements meant to protect affected residents. The alleged problems began early in the conversion process and have continued through the present.

According to the complaints, CHP illegally discriminated against the families from Langston Park who returned to the Summit after construction based on disability status or having children. CHP forbade anyone under the age of 18 from watching their younger siblings, taking out the trash on their own, accessing the computers and other amenities at the community center if not under the direct supervision of an adult, or playing outside unsupervised. One letter from the Summit’s property manager even threatened to call Child Protective Services if children were left in the care of someone under the age of 18. According to Helen Hardiman, Vice President of Law and Policy at Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc., “CHP’s alleged behavior left

families with children little choice: stay inside or face harsh penalties. This is exactly the kind of discrimination the Fair Housing Act outlaws.”

One of the complaints states that HRHA and CHP denied a resident’s repeated requests for a first floor unit at the Summit to accommodate her medical disability, in violation of her rights. Last year, she died at her home in the Summit of cardiac arrest and arrhythmia, complications from the very disabilities that were exacerbated by HRHA and CHP’s alleged failure to grant her multiple requests for a reasonable accommodation. Within a week of her death, CHP moved to evict her surviving household members, her 8- and 9-year old grandnieces.

The Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) is a “public-private partnership” model for redeveloping aging public housing. In most RAD projects, public housing authorities transfer both management and a large portion of ownership of formerly public housing to private companies, but continue to subsidize the property with direct and indirect federal assistance. Langston Park was the first RAD conversion in Virginia. There are currently thirty-nine other public housing communities in Virginia that HUD has approved to convert under the program. (See below for a list of localities/communities approved for RAD conversion.)

The RAD conversion process requires property management to relocate residents to suitable housing on or off site during construction. According to the HUD complaints, when construction work began at the Summit in 2014, residents were relocated off-site to apartments that were overcrowded or virtually uninhabitable. Families as large as six members were crammed into two-bedroom apartments. Many of these apartments also had moisture and mold issues, according to some parents who allege that previously healthy children experienced medical problems while living in the overcrowded and rundown units, including asthma and other breathing issues.

RAD program rules also guarantee all residents the right to return to the redeveloped property. Some families from Langston Park allege they were pushed out of the community altogether, and not allowed to return to the Summit after construction. HRHA and CHP rebuilt the Summit with fewer large apartments for families with children. One resident in Langston Park with a daughter in a wheelchair claims CHP told her that there would not be an accessible unit at the Summit. Several residents at Langston Park claim they were misinformed and pressured, in violation of program rules, to accept buyout offers to move elsewhere, apparently because their return to the Summit would limit CHP’s eligibility for tax credit financing. According to Kim Rolla, Staff Attorney and Housing Coordinator at Legal Aid Justice Center, “all of these alleged actions denied residents – the intended beneficiaries of this program – their federally guaranteed right to return to the redeveloped property. It caused displaced residents extreme financial hardship. Many ended up in unstable housing situations, and some even experienced periods of homelessness.”

Despite these widespread problems, both CHP and HRHA have been approved for another RAD conversion together. Both are currently involved in the conversion of an elderly and disabled public housing building – Kippax Place – where advocates are uncovering similar problems and additional ones unique to that building’s population.

LAJC and HOME filed the complaints on behalf of their clients to prevent further violations of the rights of their clients and other residents who were harmed in the conversion process and/or are continuing to be discriminated against. RAD is often touted as the new frontier of public housing, but HUD, housing authorities, and RAD developers must remember their obligations under the law. The redevelopment of Langston Park is a prime example of a failure to do so, and at the expense of residents who deserve better.

HUD's announcement of investigation: [click here](#).

HUD Approved RAD Projects in Virginia

See <http://www.rad-watch.org/#!/rad-project-directory-01> for a list of all projects nationally.

Name of Community	Location in Virginia	Units	Public Housing Authority	Preliminary Approval for RAD Conversion	RAD Conversion Commitment	RAD Conversion Closing	Subsidy Type
Lincoln Park	Portsmouth	48	Portsmouth Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/25/2015			PBRA
Lincoln Park Phase II	Portsmouth	78	Portsmouth Redevelopment & Housing Authority	6/23/2016			PBRA
Orcutt Townhomes	Newport News	40	Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/27/2015			PBRA
Orcutt Townhomes III	Newport News	30	Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/27/2015	8/1/2016		PBRA
Diggs Park	Norfolk	210	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
Young Park	Norfolk	250	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
North Wellington Place	Norfolk	25	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV

Broad Creek Phase II / BG Phase II	Norfolk	29	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
Broad Creek Phase II / MM Phase II	Norfolk	56	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
Grandy Village	Norfolk	275	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
Grandy View	Norfolk	16	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/14/2015			PBV
Creighton Court	Richmond	45	Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	9/4/2015			PBRA
Creighton Court Phase 1A	Richmond	18	Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	9/4/2015			PBRA
Fay Phase II	Richmond	51	Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	9/4/2015			PBRA
Fay Phase III	Richmond	72	Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	9/11/2015			PBRA
Langley Village	Hampton	146	Hampton Redevelopment & Housing Authority	5/4/2016			PBV
Audubon Apartments	Alexandria	36	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Audubon Apartments B	Alexandria	46	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	4/4/2016			PBV

Audubon Apartments C	Alexandria	37	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	8/29/2016			PBV
H. Woods, H. Woods S, Sheffield	Annandale	40	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	5/15/2015			PBV
The Park	Springfield	24	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	5/15/2015			PBV
Robinson Square C	Fairfax	12	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Robinson Square D	Fairfax	20	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Ragan Oaks	Fairfax	16	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Greenwood Apartments	Falls Church	36	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Old Mill	Alexandria	48	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Westford Section III	Alexandria	21	Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority	3/26/2015			PBV
Pecan Acres	Petersburg	159	Petersburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority	4/1/2015			PRBA
Sycamore Towers	Petersburg	100	Petersburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority	4/1/2015			PBV

Pin Oaks	Petersburg	75	Petersburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority	6/23/2016			PBV
Dale Homes	Portsmouth	146	Petersburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/25/2015	6/9/2016	8/31/2016	PBV
Kippax Place	Hopewell	100	Hopewell Redevelopment & Housing Authority	9/18/2014	4/5/2016	7/13/2016	PBV
Brighton Apartments & Oyster Point	Newport News	200	Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/27/2015	12/10/2015	1/29/2016	PBRA
Cypress Terrace	Newport News	85	Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2/27/2015	12/10/2015	1/29/2016	PBRA
Farrier Court	Staunton	150	Staunton Redevelopment & Housing Authority	12/24/2013	7/16/2015	10/30/2015	PBRA
Fay Towers Phase 1 (Brookland Park)	Richmond	77	Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	1/1/2013	8/6/2015	9/29/2015	PBRA
Berkley Court	Franklin	75	Franklin Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/21/2013	4/4/2014	7/31/2014	PBRA
Pretlow Gardens/ Old Towne Terrace	Franklin	75	Franklin Redevelopment & Housing Authority	10/21/2013	4/4/2014	7/31/2014	PBRA
Piper Square	Hopewell	30	Hopewell Redevelopment & Housing Authority	1/1/2013	12/9/2013	4/11/2014	PBV

About the Legal Aid Justice Center

The Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) fights injustice in the lives of individual Virginians while rooting out exploitative policies and practices that keep people in poverty. LAJC uses impact litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy to solve urgent problems in areas such as housing, education, civil rights, immigration, healthcare and consumer finance. LAJC's primary service areas are Charlottesville, Northern Virginia, Richmond and Petersburg, but the effects of their work are felt statewide. *Follow Legal Aid Justice Center on Twitter [@LegalAidJustice](https://twitter.com/LegalAidJustice) and find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/LegalAidJustice). www.justice4all.org*

About Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc.

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME), founded in 1971, is a statewide fair housing non-profit. HOME's mission is to ensure equal access to housing for all people. HOME investigates housing discrimination and provides support for victims of discrimination. You can learn more about HOME and all of its services at www.HOMEofVA.org.

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