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***Fair Housing Agency Settles Source of Income and Disability Lawsuits
Charging Discrimination by Management Company***

Bohemia, New York — October 4, 2016— Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (“LIHS”) today announced a settlement agreement that resolves complaints filed with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) and the Nassau County Commission on Human Rights (“CHR”) against Ben-Art Realty Corporation, a real estate management company with multiple properties in Nassau County and an additional property in Suffolk County.

The complaints alleged violations of the federal Fair Housing Act and the local Nassau County Human Rights Law. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, disability, sex, and familial status. The Nassau County Human Rights Law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person’s Source of Income, whether derived from employment, child support, alimony, Social Security Disability, subsidy/rental assistance programs, such as section 8 (Housing Choice Voucher Program), or public assistance.

After receiving an allegation of discrimination, LIHS conducted an investigation of Ben-Art Realty Corporation and utilized testing to document and assess treatment of various rental candidates, comparing those with income from Social Security Disability or other disability related sources and those with service animals to other applicants. LIHS’ investigation revealed that testers with income from disability related sources were denied the opportunity to rent and were informed that income must come from employment in order to qualify. The complaints alleged discriminatory conduct by the management company on the basis of both disability and source of income.

The terms of the settlement include affirmative relief provisions, beyond the Respondents’ obligations to follow the fair housing laws in the future. The settlement requires Ben-Art Realty Corporation to adopt a non-discrimination policy to be distributed to employees and superintendents at buildings they manage who have responsibility for showing apartments, processing apartments, renting apartments, and/or managing and maintaining rental housing, to

provide fair housing training for those employees and superintendents, as well as for owners, and to adopt written policies for responding to requests for reasonable accommodations regarding service and emotional support animals. The settlement also provides monetary compensation to LIHS for its costs. Michelle Santantonio, LIHS' Executive Director notes: "Although Nassau County's Human Rights Law has outlawed discrimination on the basis of Source of Income since 2000, there is rampant, though rarely reported, discrimination against renters with Section 8 vouchers, subsidies from the Department of Social Services, Social Security Disability, and other lawful sources of income. We are pleased with these settlements which provide injunctive relief and provisions that will serve the public interest." As of January 21, 2015, Suffolk County's Human Rights Law also provides protection from discrimination on the basis of Source of Income. All are encouraged to report suspected violations. Call LIHS to consult or report: 1-800-660-6920 or email: Info@LIFairHousing.org.

The Fair Housing enforcement and advocacy work of LIHS is supported through grants from the Fair Housing Initiatives Program ("FHIP") of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development ("HUD") and from the Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development ("OHCD"), which provides support for LIHS' housing counseling and fair housing efforts with federal pass-through funds of HUD's Community Development Block Grant program.

Founded in 1969, Long Island Housing Services (www.LIFairHousing.org) is a private, non-profit HUD-qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organization and a federally certified, approved Housing Counseling agency. **LIHS' mission is the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promotion of decent and affordable housing through advocacy and education.**
