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**Connecticut Superior Court Awards Tenant \$109,000 for
Discrimination Based on Lawful Source of Income**

HARTFORD, CT (January 22, 2013) – Ms. Palmer, a domestic violence survivor, was staying temporarily on her cousin’s couch when she obtained a Security Deposit Guarantee (SDG) from the Department of Social Services (DSS). The program provides tenants without the resources for a security deposit with a DSS-backed guaranty. Ms. Palmer attempted to use the Guarantee to rent an apartment in Manchester, from landlord Mr. Kenneth Burkamp. As Judge Oliver of the Connecticut Housing Court explained, “Despite [Ms. Palmer] indicating to the defendant that his refusal was illegal, Kenneth Burkamp continued to refuse to accept the SDG, indicating his reluctance to deal with the State of Connecticut.”

After being denied the apartment, Ms. Palmer contacted the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, where attorneys Greg Kirschner and Timothy Bennett-Smyth, assisted by the law firm of Robinson & Cole LLP, agreed to represent Ms. Palmer. On December 21, 2012, the Connecticut Housing Court awarded Ms. Palmer \$109,788.50 in compensatory damages and attorneys’ fees. The award includes a civil penalty against the defendant for willful conduct and is designed to deter other landlords from violating the fair housing laws.

The Center’s lead attorney on the case, Timothy Bennett-Smyth, explained its importance, “lawful source of income discrimination disproportionately affects people of color, single mothers, persons with disabilities and domestic violence survivors. The refusal to participate in these programs by certain landlords causes real harm and it is unacceptable. Hopefully, this decision by the Court will put all housing providers on notice of the importance of complying with the Connecticut Human Rights Act.”

The importance of following the anti-discrimination laws was explained by Superior Court Judge Vernon Oliver:

Clearly if respondent landlords such as Mr. Burkamp were allowed to simply ‘opt out’ of compliance with the statutory framework and thwart anti-discrimination laws designed to provide prospective tenants with an opportunity to acquire suitable housing regardless of source of income, then the work of the legislature and the courts would be a sham. At trial, the respondent was far from contrite...

“Dedication to community and public service has long been a hallmark of Robinson & Cole,” said [Brian R. Smith](#), chair of the firm’s land use practice who, with associate [Evan J. Seeman](#), assisted in representing Ms. Palmer. “It’s through cases like this, pursued on behalf of clients like Ms. Palmer, that real change is effected and justice is served. We are happy to have played a role in bringing about this result, which is as meaningful as any in our firm’s long history of pro bono service.”

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The Center’s legal director, Greg Kirschner added “The Center relies on the private bar’s commitment to pro bono work to further its mission of ensuring all of Connecticut’s citizens have access to housing of their choice free from discrimination. Robinson & Cole LLP provided exceptional service to Ms. Palmer and demonstrated a firm-wide commitment to the case.”

More about Robinson & Cole LLP

Robinson & Cole is an Am Law 200 firm with approximately 225 lawyers in nine offices serving regional, national, and international clients, from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies. Since 1845, Robinson & Cole has expanded to meet the changing needs of clients. The firm represents corporate, governmental, and nonprofit entities, as well as individual clients, in a wide range of matters, including corporate; business and insurance litigation; tax and tax-exempt; finance; public finance; land use, environmental and utilities, and real estate; health law; labor, employment, and benefits; intellectual property and technology; and government relations. For more information, please visit www.rc.com.

About the Legal Team

Ms. Palmer was represented at trial by the Fair Housing Center’s staff attorney Timothy Bennett-Smyth and Joel Norwood, formerly an associate at Robinson & Cole LLP and Evan Seeman, an associate at Robinson & Cole LLP. Trial preparation was supervised by the Fair Housing Center’s legal director, Greg Kirschner and R&C partner Brian Smith.

About the Connecticut Fair Housing Center

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide nonprofit fair housing organization dedicated to ensuring that all people, and principally those with scarce financial resources, have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut. We are located on the web at www.ctfairhousing.org.

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