

PROPOSED CUTS IN SECTION 8 PROGRAM WILL HURT VERY LOW INCOME TENANTS!!

The Federal Section 8 housing assistance program was created in 1970 to help low-income families, disabled individuals, and elders pay the cost of private rental housing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets a maximum rent level for each local area, and issues vouchers to tenants to make up the difference between that rent and what assisted tenants can afford to pay (30% of their income). Low-income tenants need this help because escalating private rents far exceed their ability to pay. For example, in Greater Boston, the median hourly wage needed to afford a one bedroom apartment is more than \$20. The average income of Section 8 tenants is about \$7 per hour.

HUD has proposed a reduction of more than 10% in funding for the program. This cut will force local housing authorities, which administer Section 8, to either drop tenants from the program, or slash the value of the vouchers. In the first case, thousands of low-income families, elderly, and disabled men and women will be evicted because they are unable to pay their rent on their own. And in the second case, landlords will withdraw from the program because Section 8 will not pay them the market rent. In Cambridge, the housing authority will need to either eliminate vouchers for 280 of its 2,300 Section 8 tenants, or raise the monthly rent tenants must pay by almost \$100. For example, a single mother earning \$1,120 per month, who is now paying \$336 for a one bedroom, will be asked to pay \$436, leaving just \$684 a month for utilities, food, clothing, transportation, healthcare and other necessities.

These are desperate times for low-income tenants. The virtual lack of new vouchers makes it difficult for CLSACC to help tenants who need rental assistance. Now we must prepare to help those who are at risk to lose the vouchers that keep a roof over their heads. CLSACC will partner with other agencies to oppose cuts in Section 8. With your help, CLSACC continues to fight to keep people in their homes.

FROM OUR CASE FILES: HELPING TENANTS FIGHT BACK



Tanya's Apartment Building

Months before Tanya's lease expired, the investor who bought her building began advertising condos for sale. He notified Tanya that unless she decided to purchase her unit, she would have to vacate her apartment when the lease expired. Panicked, Tanya called CLSACC for help. She was relieved to learn that in cases of condo

conversion, the law entitled her to a year's notice. When the new owner insisted Tanya show her apartment to potential buyers, CLSACC took the case.

CLSACC's housing attorney sent the owner a letter detailing the Condominium Conversion Law, and advised him not to enter the apartment without Tanya's prior consent. Ignoring CLSACC's warning, and in blatant violation of the law, the owner not only entered the apartment, he began renovations, removed windows, changed locks and turned off the water. He even gave Tanya notice of a huge rent increase! CLSACC immediately obtained a court order to restore the windows, get a new key, and keep the landlord out. The units have since been taken off the market, and CLSACC continues to represent Tanya in her legal fight.

Conversion of multi-family houses into luxury condos is an ongoing problem for residents in many communities. Investors purchase buildings with affordable rental units, evict the tenants, often illegally, and convert the apartments into expensive condos. CLSACC represents tenants whose landlords attempt to circumvent the Condominium Conversion Law.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: DONNA DAVIS



Donna Davis

As a resident and business owner in Cambridge, Donna Davis decided to do pro bono work for CLSACC because "People need someone who is willing to fight for them and assure that their rights are protected." Donna has a Masters in City Planning, and served as MIT's liaison

to city and state agencies, working to develop social service programs for elderly residents of Cambridge. This experience made Donna a perfect match as a volunteer in CLSACC's Housing Unit. Donna works alongside Housing Attorney John Froio, where she provides paralegal services, helps in negotiations, and serves as a client advocate.

As one client explained, "After months of being harassed by eviction notices, having someone stand up for me was invaluable. Ms. Davis' advocacy resulted

in the CHA doing a thorough check of their records, which showed I was not in debt to them. CLSACC ultimately helped me solve my problem."

Since she began volunteering in 2001, Donna has formed a deep appreciation of public service attorneys and is especially impressed by the dedication of everyone at CLSACC ~ staff and volunteers alike. Donna's help affords attorney Froio more time for direct representation and legal assistance. When asked about Donna's contributions, John said "it is impossible for me to recount all the ways that Donna's time and experience have been an asset not only to me, but to my clients. Donna is a dedicated and compassionate advocate, and I feel lucky to have her on our team."

In addition to her advocacy work with attorney Froio, Donna has recently joined CLSACC's Fundraising Committee. As a member of this committee, Donna hopes to use her ties in the community to spread the word about the important work CLSACC is doing.

Donate Online by visiting www.CLSACC.org

FOCUSING ON OUR FUTURE . . .

CLSACC is excited to report that it has completed an intensive strategic planning process. Look for more details in our 2004 Annual Report.

THIS JUST IN:

In 2004, the Dr. Brenner Award will be presented to Clinical Director,

Dr. Paul Goldmuntz

for 20 years of service
to CLSACC clients.

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