

PRESS RELEASE



CHICAGO LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW, INC.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago Lawyers' Committee and Open Communities Negotiate Settlement in Housing Discrimination Lawsuit against Rentology *Systematic Investigation Uncovers Discrimination against People with Disabilities*

Chicago, IL, January 6, 2016 – The Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. (CLCCRUL) and Open Communities announced a settlement agreement that resolves a two year housing discrimination investigation of Domus Group LLC and their agent, Rentology.

In August 2013 and January 2014, CLCCRUL and Open Communities conducted reasonable accommodation fair housing tests at various Chicago area locations of the rental property management company Rentology. The tests revealed different terms and conditions, and unwillingness to accommodate requests for service animals or emotional support animals. Federal and state laws against housing discrimination require landlords to make reasonable changes to their rules to accommodate residents with disabilities, including those needing support animals to cope with their disabilities.

On January 9, 2015, CLCCRUL and Open Communities filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) alleging that the Domus Group LLC discriminated against people with disabilities based on their refusal to rent or grant reasonable accommodations to fair housing testers. HUD transferred the complaint to Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) who conducted its own investigation.

The agreement includes \$11,000 in damages for CLCCRUL and \$3,000 for Open Communities, fair housing training for staff, and a written fair housing and equal opportunity policy that will require leasing agents to comply with fair housing laws including requests for reasonable accommodations. The settlement agreement also requires the company to add a fair housing logo and the "Equal Housing Opportunity" slogan to its website.

CLCCRUL and Open Communities were represented by Linton Childs, a partner with CLCCRUL member firm, Sidley Austin LLP. CLCCRUL staff attorney Jessica Schneider and Open Communities Director of Fair Housing Neda Nozari Brisport were co-counselors. "It is imperative that housing providers make every accommodation or modification required to ensure tenants have equal access

to and enjoyment of his or her housing,” said Ms. Schneider. “We are hopeful that cases like these set precedent for other property managers who truly want to provide safe, accessible and welcoming homes to all people. And Open Communities is here as a resource to provide free fair housing trainings for those interested,” said Ms. Brisport.

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About Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. (CLCCRUL)

Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. protects and promotes civil rights by bringing the strength and prestige of the private bar to bear on the problems of poverty and discrimination. Founded in 1969, CLCCRUL champions equal justice and community development for underrepresented people by partnering with volunteer lawyers to provide litigation and transactional representation. The Fair Housing Project works to eliminate housing discrimination and promote fair and equal housing in the Chicago metropolitan area through legal representation, education, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.clccrul.org

About Open Communities

Open Communities, formerly the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, is a nonprofit organization founded in 1972 whose mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago. The agency works with current and prospective residents and local groups to promote economically and culturally diverse communities in north suburban Chicago. Its services include the investigation of fair housing discrimination and landlord/tenant complaints, foreclosure and predatory lending counseling and prevention, Homesharing, immigrant leadership development, education justice, fair housing education and advocacy, and grassroots organizing. For more information, visit www.open-communities.org

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.