Attorney General James Announces $4.5 Million Grant to Fund Fair Housing Programs

Grants to Fund Programs Dedicated to Eradicating Discriminatory Housing Practices Across New York

NEW YORK – New York Attorney General Letitia James today announced a $4.5 million grant to the Eliminating Barriers to Housing in New York (EBHNY) program, which aims to root out discriminatory housing practices and improve the overall housing stock in the state.

EBHNY is a two-year pilot program that will advance Attorney General James' priority to make housing safe, healthy, and affordable throughout the state. EBHNY funds will be made available to Qualified Fair Housing Organizations (QFHO) that are operating as full-service fair housing programs.

"In these difficult times, the last thing New Yorkers should have to worry about is housing discrimination based on factors like race, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or age," said **Attorney General James**. "EBHNY will remove barriers to housing choice throughout the state by investigating and eliminating sources of discrimination and by funding necessary safety modifications. I look forward to continuing to work with our partners across the state to ensure fair housing for all New Yorkers."

Up to 80 percent of the grant dollars from EBHNY to QFHOs will be dedicated to systemic testing investigations and fair housing and fair lending testing enforcement, as well as to support education and outreach efforts. The goal of the investigations and testing is to expose systemic discrimination based on factors such as race, national origin, disability, or source of income. The remaining 20 percent of the grant funds will be used to enable QFHOs to assist income-eligible persons with disabilities and families with children by removing any physical or health barriers in current housing situations.

There are currently six QFHOs that are eligible for EBHNY funds: CNY Fair Housing, the Fair Housing Justice Center, Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), Legal Assistance of Western New York, Long Island Housing Services, and Westchester Residential Opportunities. In total, the funds aim to service 30 counties across the state, including areas that are currently "fair housing deserts."

Enterprise Community Partners — a national community development intermediary that specializes in affordable housing — is overseeing the EBHNY program. Enterprise will conduct individual quarterly check-ins with each of the QFHOs, as well as monthly calls between the QFHOs and the Office of the Attorney General to discuss progress.

"Enterprise Community Partners is proud to partner with the New York State Office of the Attorney General to support the critical work of fair housing organizations statewide," said **Judi Kende, vice president and New York market leader, Enterprise Community Partners**. "Communities vulnerable to housing discrimination and disinvestment, including people with disabilities and people of color, will be

hit hardest by the impact of COVID-19. In these urgent times, the expertise of these fair housing organizations is invaluable to build on our advocacy for vulnerable populations. We look forward to working with these key partners to modify units, eliminate housing-choice barriers, and expand access to safe, healthy housing for all protected classes across New York State."

"HOME applauds the efforts of the New York State Office of the Attorney General to enforce housing choice and remove impediments to fair housing in our communities," said **DeAnna Eason, executive director, HOME**. "We are thrilled to work with this statewide coalition to address the critical fair housing needs of all New Yorkers. Working with our partners across the state, the EBHNY program will provide essential resources for fighting housing discrimination and educating individuals on their housing rights. The EBHNY program will further HOME's core mission and enable Western New Yorkers to have increased access to resources to address housing discrimination. It is now more important than ever to have robust enforcement of fair housing laws to ensure that this current health crisis does not become a housing crisis."

"The EBHNY grant funds are urgently needed right now," said **Ian Wilder, executive director, Long Island Housing Services**. "These funds will help Long Island Housing Services overcome housing discrimination based on race and disability emanating from the COVID-19 crisis. The increased turbulence in the housing market due to many Long Islanders new inability to pay rent or mortgages calls for a strong enforcement response."

"We are pleased to partner with the New York State Attorney General's Office on this vital fair housing enforcement initiative and look forward to expanding housing opportunities and assisting New Yorkers who still face persistent and unlawful discrimination," said **Fred Freiberg, executive director, Fair Housing Justice Center**.

"Fair housing testing and education is crucial to equal housing opportunity," said **Marlene Zarfes, executive director, Westchester Residential Opportunities**. "This grant will provide sorely needed funding for fair housing testing and education throughout New York State, as well as funding to make housing more accessible for those in need. Westchester Residential Opportunities is gratified that this need has been recognized and appreciates the opportunity to further fair housing."

"During this time of uncertainty, fair housing enforcement and education are necessary to protect the rights of all New Yorkers," said **Sally Santangelo, executive director, CNY Fair Housing**. "As such, CNY Fair Housing is grateful for this opportunity to provide increased fair housing services in both our current service area and in parts of the state that were previously unserved. We are excited that this new partnership with the Attorney General's Office will help protect housing rights across Central and Northern New York."

Each QFHO may apply for at least $666,700 — totaling $4 million for the six grantees in a two-year period. The additional $500,000 would be made available on a competitive basis for the QFHOs to

conduct educational and enforcement activities outside of their service areas. With these funds, the EBHNY program aims to have each QFHO complete between 70-100 tests per year. Additionally, the QFHOs will convene annually — virtually or in-person — to share best practices, as well as to connect with other industry experts.

Funding for the initiative comes from a settlement between the Office of the Attorney General and the Royal Bank of Scotland, which addresses the bank's misconduct that contributed to the housing crisis.

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