

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Lawyers' Committee and Cooley LLP File Lawsuit on behalf of Tenants and Landlords Victimized by Mastic Beach's Discriminatory Housing Code Enforcement Practices**

**Mastic Beach, New York** – On February 9, 2015, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (Lawyers' Committee) and pro bono counsel Cooley LLP filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Central Islip on behalf of Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (LIHS), six tenants, and two landlords against the Village of Mastic Beach and the head of the Village's housing code enforcement, Timothy Brojer. The Lawyers' Committee and Cooley LLP are representing the plaintiffs on a pro bono basis.

The suit alleges that since incorporating in 2010, the Village has abused its newfound powers over the rental permit and code enforcement processes by waging an aggressive campaign against low-income, primarily African American, tenants receiving housing assistance, as well as their landlords, to drive such tenants out of the Village. The civil rights lawsuit alleges that Brojer and the Village engaged in a pattern of unlawfully evicting these tenants and their families from their homes without cause, without notice and without due process.

According to the complaint, code enforcement officials would condemn a house or find it "unfit for human habitation" without sufficient grounds and then illegally evict the tenants and their families in violation of procedural safeguards for such evictions, often forcing the tenants and their families to move out within two hours or less. Brojer and the Village then harassed and intimidated these tenants, as well as the landlords who rented to them, in an effort to prevent these tenants from returning to their homes and to drive them out of the area. Several of these families were forced to live in homeless shelters and one family remains in a homeless shelter currently.

"These illegal evictions have caused plaintiffs and their families not only economic injury but also significant psychological damage, depriving them of basic due process protections and the ability to live peacefully with their families in Mastic Beach," said Lawyers' Committee Senior Special Counsel Linda Mullenbach. "The Lawyers' Committee is committed to combatting racial discrimination and seeking justice for those who are subjected to illegal harassment and intimidation in their efforts to secure and maintain housing for their families."

"We have worked hard as a country to prevent injustices which materially undermine basic civil rights and liberties," said Cooley LLP Partner and Lawyers' Committee Board member Joe

Drayton. “The use of illegal racial and socioeconomic profiling to remove individuals and families from their homes without reasonable notice and due process is a great injustice.”

LIHS’ Executive Director Michelle Santantonio, states “The discriminatory and abusive actions taken by the Village officials reveal a horrendous, flagrant disregard for fair housing laws, Constitutional safeguards, tenant’s rights, and the nation’s long held priorities to promote racial and economic integration and outlaw segregation. The affected families, their landlords, as well as their friends and neighbors suffer the effects of illegal discrimination. LIHS is committed to helping victims of discrimination to challenge practices that interfere with their rights.”

The case, captioned *Long Island Housing Services, Inc., et al v. Village of Mastic Beach and Timothy Brojer*, Case Number 2:15-cv-00629, includes claims under federal civil rights laws and the federal Constitution, including under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses, and also alleges violations of plaintiffs’ rights under the federal Fair Housing Act and Suffolk County’s Human Rights Law, both of which prohibit racially discriminatory enforcement of local housing codes. The complaint seeks compensatory and punitive damages, a declaratory judgment, and an injunction to prevent further unlawful housing practices and to order Mastic Beach to develop a housing code that conforms to federal and local law. [\[Click Here to View Complaint\]](#)

#### **About The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**

The Lawyers’ Committee, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. The Lawyers’ Committee celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013 as it continued its quest of “Moving America Towards Justice.” The principal mission of the Lawyers’ Committee is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice under law, particularly in the areas of fair housing and fair lending, community development, employment, voting, education and environmental justice.

For more information about the Lawyers’ Committee, visit [www.lawyerscommittee.org](http://www.lawyerscommittee.org).

#### **About Cooley LLP**

Cooley's lawyers solve legal issues for entrepreneurs, investors, financial institutions and established companies. Clients partner with Cooley on transformative deals, complex IP and regulatory matters, and high-stakes litigation, often where innovation meets the law.

Cooley has 850 lawyers across 12 offices in the United States, China and Europe.

For more information about Cooley, visit [www.cooley.com](http://www.cooley.com).

#### **About Long Island Housing Services, Inc.**

Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (LIHS) is the principal, non-profit fair housing advocacy and enforcement organization serving Long Island, New York. Founded in 1969, LIHS’ mission is the elimination of unlawful housing discrimination and promotion of decent and affordable housing through advocacy and education. LIHS is a HUD-qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organization and a federally approved Housing Counseling agency. Its work is supported in part by the Fair Housing Initiatives Program for Private Enforcement. Tenants, landlords, and real estate agents who believe

they may have been victims of discriminatory housing code enforcement practices in the Long Island area may contact Long Island Housing Services, <http://www.lifairhousing.org/> or (631) 567-5111.

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