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Legal Aid Society, Hughes Hubbard & Reed Reach Deal to Help New York Families Avoid Eviction

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New York, NY, February 27, 2017 – Hughes Hubbard and the Legal Aid Society announced the favorable settlement of a class action lawsuit they brought challenging the adequacy of housing assistance for poor families. The settlement will help thousands of families avoid eviction and homelessness.

According to [the announcement](#), New York State will substantially increase the monthly rent subsidies it provides to low-income families in New York City, which has the largest number of homeless people in the U.S. The agreement also expands the city's public rental assistance program, currently restricted to families with minor children who have been sued by a landlord, to include survivors of domestic violence.

"There are far too many families in New York who face the risk of homelessness each year, and we are thrilled that the state of New York and New York City came to an agreement that will ultimately help thousands of New Yorkers stay in their homes," Ted Mayer said in a statement.

The settlement came as skyrocketing rent increases and cuts in other rent supplement programs have helped drive New York City's homelessness population to record levels as families are unable to keep or find affordable housing given the out-of-date shelter supplements. More than 60,000 people live in city homeless shelters and thousands more stay in specialized shelters for youth and domestic violence survivors.

The fair market rent (FMR) for a one-bedroom apartment across the five boroughs in New York City is approximately \$1,400 and about \$1,600 for a two-bedroom apartment. The FMRs are released by the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are used to set Section 8 rent subsidy levels. But the federally-funded Section 8 program has long been hampered by budget cuts, with families facing waiting periods of many years for the coveted vouchers, another factor that has helped increase homelessness.

Since 2008, HHR, through then associate, later partner and now alum Michael Tiger, consulted with the Legal Aid

Society on the issue, looking for the right timing and the right vehicle to bring this issue to court. HHR filed a lawsuit in December 2015 on behalf of four single mothers -- two in the Bronx, one on Staten Island and one in Manhattan -- facing eviction and homelessness because the monthly public assistance they received from the state was "grossly inadequate" and far below FMR levels.

Daniela Tejada, a 27-year-old plaintiff who lives in a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx with her 6-year-old and 2-year-old daughters, expressed relief to The New York Times over the settlement agreement. "I feel happy that it's going to help other women with children," she said. "It's really hard out here. All these rents are superhigh."

Tejada's one-bedroom apartment rents for \$1,050, which was lowered from \$1,300 after she fought her landlord in housing court. But it was still more than her \$850 subsidy, which will now rise as a result of the settlement. "Before, everything would go to the rent," said Tejada, who is unemployed, but would like to work in the healthcare field as a sonographer. "Now, at least, I can save and pay for school."

Tiger took a lead role in bringing the lawsuit and negotiating the settlement. Fara Tabatabai joined the team in a senior role after associate John Lyons moved to Philadelphia. After Tiger's departure, Ted Mayer stepped in to lead the team, which also included Margot Warhit and HHR alum Cindy Zapata.

Click [here](#) to view a copy of the Class Action Complaint and [here](#) to view the Proposed Settlement Agreement or go to www.legal-aid.org.

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Theodore V.H. Mayer



Fara Tabatabai