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News Release

For Immediate Release

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Homeless people, many with disabilities, sue City of San Diego over unfair ticketing

Targeted enforcement treats people like criminals

(San Diego, CA – November 16, 2017) A group of homeless people, many with disabilities, sued the City of San Diego today over unfair ticketing of their vehicles. They are represented by Fish & Richardson, Disability Rights California, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Dreher Law Firm, and Bonnett Fairbourn & Balint. The class-action lawsuit challenges enforcement of ordinances banning nighttime RV parking and vehicle habitation that unfairly target homeless people.

"For our homeless clients, many of whom have disabilities and are on fixed incomes, their vehicles are their only form of shelter available to them," said Ann Menasche, senior attorney for Disability Rights California. "The City issues multiple citations to people who cannot afford the fines and then impounds their vehicles when they don't pay. Rather than solving the problem of homelessness, and providing the permanent housing that people need, the city is instead placing the health, safety, and very lives of our clients in further jeopardy."

The suit was filed on behalf of a class of homeless persons who own RVs or other vehicles, but cannot afford the city's high rents. It seeks an order requiring the city to stop ticketing until it has permanent accessible and affordable housing for the class members. The suit also seeks damages, restitution and attorneys' fees.

At a news conference in Balboa Park today, advocates pointed out that many of those targeted were hard-working people who paid taxes all their lives before falling on hard times. Valerie Grischy, one of the named plaintiffs, was a licensed chiropractor with a successful career before getting into a serious car accident in 2009. Her only income is SSI benefits.

"When I saw that I got less than \$900 a month on disability, I knew that I could either pay rent or pay for other necessities I need to live. But not both," Grischy said. "So I used my back SSI money to get an RV."

"The city's ticketing policies are unconstitutional and discriminate against people with disabilities, in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act," said Tristia Bauman, attorney with National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. "An accident or traumatic event can cause anyone to become disabled and no longer be able to work. With so little affordable housing available, it is no wonder that many end up homeless."

"Fish is proud to partner with Disability Rights California and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty on this important issue facing some of San Diego's most vulnerable residents," said Geoff Biegler, attorney with Fish and Richardson.

Following today's press conference, a caravan of RVs and other vehicles weaved through downtown, decorated with signs demanding that the city stop ticketing the homeless. The San Diego Housing Emergency Alliance (SDHEMA) organized the protest as part of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

Disability Rights California is a non-profit organization founded in 1978. We protect the rights of people with disabilities. Visit disabilityrightsca.org.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is the only national legal group dedicated to ending and preventing homelessness. Visit www.nlchp.org.