



# Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Announcing: Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California Negotiates Settlement of Source of Income Discrimination Complaint

San Rafael, CA – In mid-May, an agreement was executed in settlement of a source of income discrimination complaint brought by Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) against Greenbrae Management, Inc., which manages Bon Air Apartments in Greenbrae. The complaint (which can be accessed [here](#)), filed with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), alleged that agents of Greenbrae Management Inc. discriminated against housing choice voucher holders, or Section 8 recipients.

In 2020, FHANC received a call from a Section 8 recipient who reported that she had called Greenbrae Management Inc. to inquire about renting a unit at Bon Air Apts. in Greenbrae and was told that they do not accept Section 8 vouchers. After learning about their Section 8 policy, she later called back and, without disclosing that she had a Section 8 voucher, asked to be added to their waitlist. She was told that once she reached the top of the waitlist she would be permitted to submit a rental application, at which time she planned to disclose her source of income – specifically her Section 8 voucher – and asked that FHANC intervene if she were not permitted to apply as a result. However, prior to reaching the top of the waitlist she found alternate housing that accepted her Section 8 voucher, and ultimately chose not to join the complaint.

After she contacted FHANC, the agency conducted multiple investigations and uncovered evidence corroborating her allegations. As a result of investing significant resources, conducting multiple investigations, and engaging in education and outreach activities in order to counteract the discriminatory housing practices of Greenbrae Management, Inc., FHANC filed a complaint with DFEH in October 2021.

FHANC conducted outreach to educate the community about discrimination against Section 8 voucher holders. Between July 2020 and September 2021, FHANC conducted multiple fair housing law workshops for local housing providers, which included explanations of legal protections for Housing Choice Voucher holders. FHANC posted informational flyers regarding discrimination based on source of income in visible public spaces in Marin and Sonoma Counties, including stores, coffee shops, laundromats, mailbox service locations, hair and barber shops, nail salons, and restaurants. FHANC sent emails to its subscribers informing readers of California's laws prohibiting discrimination against voucher holders and posted informational flyers on its Facebook and Instagram accounts and its website.

*A local non-profit helping communities eliminate housing discrimination*

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MEMBER, NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

In September 2020, a FHANC investigator, posing as a potential renter, called Greenbrae Management to inquire about available rentals at Bon Air Apartments and spoke with a leasing agent. When the investigator asked about the landlord's Section 8 policy the agent told him that management was not currently entering into contracts with voucher holders.

In March 2021, a second investigator from FHANC called Bon Air Apartments. She spoke with an agent who told her that there was a waitlist for apartments. When the investigator revealed that she receives support from a Section 8 voucher, the agent responded that they do not accept Section 8 vouchers.

In May 2021, a third investigator from FHANC called Bon Air Apts. and spoke with an agent who told her that she could be added to a waitlist. However, when the investigator asked about their Section 8 voucher policy, the agent told her that the management's policy is not to enter into contracts with voucher holders.

The management company's policy of refusing to enter into contracts with Section 8 voucher holders directly violated the source of income protections under California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, which was amended in 2019 to include "lawful, verifiable income paid directly to a tenant or to a representative of a tenant, or paid to a housing owner or landlord on behalf of a tenant, including...but not limited to, federal housing assistance vouchers issued under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937."

As a result of DFEH's mediation process, the two parties entered into a settlement agreement in May 2022 where Greenbrae Management, Inc. agreed to the following: compensate FHANC \$25,000; have any agents who interact with tenants or prospective tenants attend FHANC's fair housing training annually for two years; distribute to employees and agents, and follow a written policy providing for equal treatment of applicants regardless of source of income or Section 8 voucher status and ensuring that their policy welcomes all voucher holders; and post English and Spanish copies of the DFEH pamphlet entitled "Fair Housing: You Are Protected Under California Law," at each of the rental properties they own; maintain copies of all documents related to the rental of dwellings managed by Greenbrae Management for a minimum of three years; and provide a summary to FHANC on a yearly basis, including: 1) the number of current Section 8 voucher holders residing at their properties; 2) the number of rental applications received from Section 8 voucher holders within the previous 12 months; and 3) the number of approved and denied rental applications received from Section 8 voucher holders during the previous 12 months.

The agreement was signed by all parties by May 13, 2022.

"Discriminating against people who have housing choice vouchers has been against the law for years," said Caroline Peattie, Executive Director of FHANC. "We have conducted quite a bit of outreach to educate the community that discrimination against housing choice vouchers is illegal. I'm happy that we reached this settlement, and hope that not only Greenbrae Management, Inc., but other housing providers will understand not only the law, but the importance of training their agents to comply with the law, in order to ensure that people with vouchers can find housing in an already difficult rental market."

The agency was represented by Supervising Attorney Julia Howard-Gibbon and Housing Counselor Maria Callahan.

If you feel you may have experienced housing discrimination, contact FHANC's office to complete an interview. Contact FHANC at [fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org](mailto:fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org) or 415-457-5025 x101 or fill out an online intake at <https://www.fairhousingnorcal.org/>.

*Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure equal housing opportunity and to educate our communities on the value of diversity in our neighborhoods. FHANC serves several Bay Area counties and provides free counseling, enforcement, mediation, and legal or administrative referrals to persons experiencing housing discrimination. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California also offers foreclosure prevention counseling, pre-purchase education, seminars to help housing providers fully understand fair housing law, and education programs for tenants and the community at large. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California is a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency. Please call Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California at (415) 457-5025 or TDD: (800) 735-2922 for more information. Note: This material is based on work supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under FHIP PEI Grant FPEI190035. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of HUD.*