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## **DFEH Settles Disability Discrimination Case Against Los Angeles Landlord and Property Management Company**

*Property Owner and Manager to Pay \$28,000 to Settle Claims of Refusal to Accommodate Tenant's Emotional Support Animal*

**Sacramento** – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has reached a settlement in a housing disability discrimination case with property owner Joseph Bodenstein and management company AMI Real Estate, Inc., involving a complainant whom they allegedly threatened with eviction from her rent-controlled apartment due to the presence of her emotional support animal.

The complainant filed a complaint with DFEH in April 2017, alleging that she received a notice demanding that she remove her emotional support dog from the apartment within thirty days or face eviction. Fearing the loss of the home she shared with her husband, the complainant removed her dog to a relative's home several hours away. The management company allegedly denied the complainant's repeated requests for permission to bring her dog back into her home as a reasonable accommodation, even after she provided documentation from a licensed mental health practitioner of her need for an emotional support animal.

DFEH found cause to believe violations of the Fair Employment and Housing Act and Unruh Civil Rights Act had occurred and, after engaging in mandatory mediation, filed a civil complaint in Los Angeles Superior Court (case number BC700961). Through continued mediation, the parties reached a settlement requiring the landlords to pay a total of \$28,000.

"The law requires landlords to modify policies, including no-pet policies, to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities," said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. "Landlords have a duty to engage in the interactive process when a tenant requests a reasonable accommodation for a disability, and those who refuse to do so because the requested accommodation involves an animal are in violation of the law."

In addition to the monetary settlement, Mr. Bodenstein and AMI Real Estate have agreed to implement a formal anti-discrimination policy, revise all no-pet policies to clarify that animals may be allowed as a reasonable accommodation for a disability, and obtain fair housing training.

Staff Counsel Timothy Martin and Civil Rights Fellow Seth Williams represented DFEH.

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*The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH's web site at [www.dfeh.ca.gov](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov).*

