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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Allentown Apartment Complex Pays \$60,000 for Discriminating Against Families with Children

Fort Washington, PA -The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania (“HECP”) and Lehigh County resident, Brittany Bernard, have entered into a settlement agreement resolving allegations that Devonshire Park Apartments violated the federal Fair Housing Act by refusing to rent to families with children.

HECP conducted an investigation of Devonshire Park, a 271 unit Allentown apartment complex that identified itself as “active adult” in its marketing materials. The investigation documented that prospective renters representing adult households were shown available units and invited to apply, while households with children were told that all residents were required to be over the age of 21 and that the complex did not permit children.

Subsequently, HECP interviewed Ms. Bernard, a woman with a young daughter who had considered renting an apartment at Devonshire Park as the complex was located across the street from her daughter’s school. When Ms. Bernard inquired about available units at the complex, she was told that they did not permit children under the age of 18.

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, known as the Fair Housing Act, makes it unlawful to discriminate in connection with any housing related transactions based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status, which is defined as the presence of children under the age of 18. While the Fair Housing Act contains an exemption allowing qualified senior housing to exclude families with children, Devonshire Park did not meet the requirements for this exemption. In order to qualify as housing for older persons under the law, a complex must have at least one person aged 55 or older residing in at least 80% of the occupied units, and must adhere to a policy that demonstrates an intent to house persons who are 55 or older. Familial status has been protected under the Fair Housing Act since 1988.

Ms. Bernard said of her experience, “Never would I have thought in all my life that simply having a child would be a reason for me to be discriminated against. Initially,

I did not realize that there was such a thing as housing discrimination when it came to having a child. This entire experience for me has been eye opening. I can only hope that my situation can be used as a way to educate and empower others to know their rights. I also hope that this brings awareness to other owners and managers of properties that it is unacceptable to infringe on the housing rights of any one for any reason.”

“Families with children already face numerous challenges finding safe and affordable rental housing without experiencing further barriers because of unlawful discrimination.” said Rachel Wentworth, HECP Executive Director. “HECP commends Devonshire Park Apartments for their cooperation in coming to an agreement that will expand access to housing opportunities for families with children in our region.”

Devonshire Park admitted no wrongdoing, but signed an agreement that will result in a payment of \$60,000 to Ms. Bernard and to HECP to cover the costs incurred during the course of the investigation and as a donation to further fair housing education in the region. Additionally, Devonshire Park has agreed to participate in a comprehensive fair housing training and to revise their policies to comply with the Fair Housing Act.

The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania is the nation’s oldest fair housing agency and has worked since 1956 to eliminate housing discrimination through education, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws. Over the past 30 years HECP has eradicated discriminatory policies at over 48,000 units of housing in the seven-county Philadelphia and Lehigh Valley regions. HECP’s services to individuals who have experienced discrimination are funded by the Fair Housing Initiatives Program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HECP and Ms. Bernard were represented in this matter by the firm Relman, Dane & Colfax.

Anyone suspecting that they were denied housing for discriminatory reasons, or any housing provider who wants information on how they can operate their business in compliance with the Fair Housing Act should contact HECP at 267-419-8918 or visit www.equalhousing.org