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For Immediate Release

Judge Orders West LA Elder Care Facility to Stop Abuse, Evictions

Staff locked elderly, disabled out of rooms, cut off phones, let bed bugs run rampant

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 10, 2016 — After enduring months of abuse, elderly and disabled residents of a residential care facility in West Los Angeles can rest a little easier after winning a temporary restraining order against the administrators of the facility on Tuesday. Judge James Chalfant ordered the owners and employees of Brentwood Manor, Inc. to stop its campaign of harassment and illegal evictions that has already pushed dozens of vulnerable residents, including veterans, out of critical housing.

Since early May, when it became known that the building was for sale, the owners' harassment has included things like removing residents' belongings from their rooms or threatening to throw them away, locking residents out of their rooms, and threatening to forcibly remove, with assistance from police, those who remained after July 31. The telephone in the common room of the facility was shut off, effectively cutting off outside contact because many tenants don't have their own phones. If the court had not intervened, the likely outcome of this unlawful behavior is that residents would be transferred to facilities that cannot properly care for them or, even worse, would become homeless.

"We are heartened that the court has granted a temporary restraining order," said Dan Grunfeld, head of west coast litigation for Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP. "Still, we are mindful that we are a long way from ensuring the Brentwood Manor residents are fully protected."

The residents are represented by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, with pro bono legal services from Morgan Lewis and assistance from the California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform.

"I am so relieved that our clients will have a reprieve from the abuse, threats and coercion that they have been experiencing for months, and that the court ordered Brentwood Manor to comply with the closure laws designed to help the most vulnerable members of our society," said Denise McGranahan, senior attorney at Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.

The temporary restraining order prohibits the owners and employees of Brentwood Manor from evicting residents, transferring residents to other care facilities without notifying them or their representatives and from stopping critical care services. They were also ordered to treat residents'

belongings for bedbugs so that they do not bring the bedbug infestation to other facilities.

“This is one building, but it’s a microcosm of what’s happening all over Los Angeles and across the country,” said Michelle Kezirian, litigation director for Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County. “This is housing of last resort for so many elderly and disabled people. If they lose it, where will they go?”

The owners of Brentwood Manor, at 1449 Wellesley Ave., have not prepared relocation plans that address residents’ care and safety needs, as required by state law. Because of their disregard of state law (Health and Safety Code 1569.682), the facility and its operators have been cited by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (“CCL”). But the citations did not halt the illegal activities, and in the last three months, more than 100 tenants have been pushed out of the building.

Last week, 17 residents of Brentwood Manor filed suit against its owners and employees. The lawsuit seeks to stop the harassment of and retaliation against residents and to stop the illegal eviction against Brentwood Manor residents.

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About Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA)

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles is the frontline law firm for poor and low-income people in Los Angeles. It provides legal representation and other legal assistance to low-income people in civil legal matters. It has five offices in the Greater Los Angeles areas, along with four Self-Help Legal Access Centers at area courthouses and three domestic violence clinics.

About Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA)

Neighborhood Legal Services is a steadfast advocate for individuals, families and communities throughout Los Angeles County. Each year NLSLA provides free assistance to more than 100,000 individuals and families through innovative projects that expand access to justice, health, housing, and economic opportunity.