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**ROCKLAND COUNTY LANDLORD AGREES TO SETTLEMENT
WITH UNITED STATES TO PROTECT FAIR HOUSING RIGHTS
OF TENANTS WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and THOMAS E. PEREZ, the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, announced today that United States District Judge DENISE L. COTE has approved a Consent Decree between the United States and BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES AT TOR VIEW VILLAGE APARTMENTS, LLC, to protect the federal Fair Housing Act rights of residents with mental disabilities at Tor View Village Apartments, located in Haverstraw, Rockland County, New York.

The United States filed suit against BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES on May 6, 2009, alleging that its refusal to accept rental guarantees from Loeb House, a local social service provider that assists people with mental disabilities, violated the Fair Housing Act. The United States alleged in its complaint that BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES should have allowed people with mental disabilities to include rental guarantees provided to them by social services organizations toward meeting the eligibility requirements to rent an apartment at the Tor View Village Apartments.

Pursuant to the Consent Decree approved late Friday, BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES has agreed, in applying its rental application income requirements, to include reasonably verifiable income provided to applicants by accredited social service agencies that provide benefits to people with disabilities. BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES has further agreed to advise its tenants promptly of this policy, and to inform and train its staff to implement this new policy. In a separate agreement with Loeb House, BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES agreed to pay Loeb House the sum of \$20,000; the United States released its monetary claims against BERK-COHEN ASSOCIATES in light of that payment.

"This settlement makes clear that landlords must provide reasonable accommodations to people with mental disabilities to enable them to enjoy the same housing rights as anyone else," said

Mr. BHARARA. "By allowing people with mental disabilities to count social services benefits toward meeting rental eligibility requirements, we expand the range of housing available to people with disabilities and help integrate them into their community of choice."

"Accessible housing is not just a civil right for individuals with disabilities, it is a basic necessity," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "This settlement ensures that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to live in these complexes."

Mr. BHARARA also expressed his appreciation to the Rockland County Commission on Human Rights for bringing this case to the Government's attention.

Assistant United States Attorneys EMILY DAUGHTRY and DAVID J. KENNEDY are in charge of the case.

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