Low-income landlords get first statewide advocacy program

Team of volunteer attorneys, law students, and staff work together to advocate for low-income landlords.

BOSTON – September 8, 2021 – The coronavirus pandemic has added intense, sudden stress to the financial well-being of small landlords in Massachusetts. Many of these mom-and-pop landlords, who often provide affordable and moderately priced housing for tenants, are struggling to collect rent and make mortgage payments during the COVID-19 crisis, creating deep and lasting harm on the rental market.

The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), part of the state-funded COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP), is helping to alleviate that stress with its Landlord Advocacy program. Comprised of a team of attorneys, paralegals, law students and volunteers from communities across Massachusetts, VLP works to deliver free legal services, help process financial assistance applications and provides access to educational materials and resources.

"I felt intimidated, frustrated, and confused until VLP," said a 48-year-old Spanish-speaking client who received $10,000 for mortgage payments and $18,000 in rental arrears since VLP began representing her.

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To be eligible for VLP assistance, one must live in and rent out part of a 2-3-family home and must meet certain income criteria (excluding the value of one’s home):

For free services, household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty line.

* Partnerships with Justice Bridge and Hampden County Legal Clinic may be able to provide low-cost services or other resources to landlords who do not meet the criteria for our free services.

“The neglected landlord population can lose their livelihoods, their homes, and their legacies if they don’t get the advice they need to be a successful landlord,” warns VLP’s Executive Director, Joanna Allison.

The first-of-its-kind Landlord Advocacy program also has an active association with the University of Massachusetts School of Law, Justice Bridge Program, Hampden County Legal Clinic, Massachusetts Black Women Attorneys and Legal Squirrel; a virtual platform created specifically for the project. These key partnerships expanded VLP’s capacity to reach and assist low-income landlords statewide.

More information can be found via the VLP telephone helpline at (857) 320-6452 or by emailing Yesenia Carrión at ycarrion@vlpnet.org. The online application can be found here: https://vlplandlord.com.
By Soben Ung
It started as a young man of 22 years old, with dreams of becoming a Doctor of Music and shared his dream with a stranger while riding an elevator, which lead to a scholarship from "Letters From Home" Review