

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Frustrated with No Response to Complaints, Tenants  
Sue NYCHA to Get Safe Wheelchair Ramp**

***Steep Ramp Violates ADA and Prevents Tenants  
with Disabilities from Safely Leaving and Entering Building***

NEW YORK, NY, AUGUST 13, 2012—Three tenants of the New York City Housing Authority’s (NYCHA) Fulton Houses on West 17<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan filed suit against the agency today for failing to correct an access ramp that is too dangerous for people using wheelchairs, motorized scooters or walkers to use safely, rendering the entrance inaccessible to them.

The suit, filed on behalf of the tenants in U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York by MFY Legal Services, Inc., a non-profit legal services provider, seeks declaratory and injunctive relief as well as compensatory and punitive damages under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the New York City Human Rights Law.

“The ramp is so dangerous that these women can’t navigate it on their own. Even when they have help, there have been accidents and close calls,” said Orier Okumakpeyi, one of the MFY attorneys representing the tenants. “NYCHA has agreed that the ramp needs to be fixed, but after six years of complaints, it has still done nothing.”

On one occasion a 67-year-old tenant who has multiple health problems that require her to use a motorized wheelchair traveled down the steep ramp accompanied by her home attendant. Near the bottom, the wheelchair tilted sideways with one set of wheels becoming airborne and the other set sliding out of control toward the metal railing and concrete wall. The tenant, who has suffered three heart attacks and three strokes, was deeply shaken and only averted physical harm when several people nearby caught the wheelchair before impact.

A recent investigation by the New York Daily News found that NYCHA was sitting on nearly \$1 billion in federal funds intended for repairs.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws are very clear that NYCHA has to have an accessible entrance for its residents who have disabilities,” said Kevin Cremin, MFY’s Director of Litigation for Disability & Aging Rights. “We’re confident that the court will agree that NYCHA’s failure to act constitutes discrimination and will order the agency to immediately fix the problem and pay damages.”

MFY Legal Services, Inc. provides free civil legal services to low-income New York City residents on a wide range of issues and specializes in protecting the rights of people with disabilities. This case was referred to MFY by the Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC) after they investigated one of the tenant’s complaints. FHJC works to eliminate housing discrimination and promotes open, accessible, and inclusive communities.