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Brooklyn Law School Seeks to Evict Disabled Tenant *Wants Apartment for Student Housing Tenant's Attorney Charges Harassment*

In an ironic turn of events, Brooklyn Law School (BLS), which once operated a free legal clinic to represent low-income seniors facing eviction, landlord harassment and other housing problems, is now engaging in the very conduct it once opposed.

After purchasing a 42-unit building at 89 Hicks Street in Brooklyn Heights two years ago, Brooklyn Law School wasted little time in attempting to evict an older disabled tenant, who has lived in the building for the past 28 years. Although the tenant has faithfully paid her rent, BLS initiated an eviction proceeding in Brooklyn Housing Court last September, claiming the tenant violated her lease by having a cat and a washing machine.

“This is total harassment of a vulnerable older adult,” said Garen McClure, Staff Attorney at MFY Legal Services, Inc., who is representing the tenant. “The previous owner of the building allowed our tenant to have pets, thereby waiving the pet clause in the lease. BLS knows the law – when a new owner takes possession, he takes it subject to existing conditions, including the waiver given by the previous owner.”

Since buying the property, BLS converted the building's original laundry room to a coin-operated facility for the exclusive use of students, denying access to non-students. The tenant has agreed to remove her washing machine if she can use the building's laundry room.

BLS charges students \$1,300 a month for a studio and \$1,500 a month for a one-bedroom apartment in the building, more than double the rent paid by the tenant for her rent-stabilized apartment.

According to McClure, BLS' attorneys are aggressively pursuing the case, hoping to frustrate the tenant. “They counted on this tenant not having an attorney,” McClure said. Nine out of ten tenants who appear in the city's housing courts are unrepresented, while nine out of ten landlords have representation.

MFY Legal Services, Inc. provides free civil legal assistance to low income New Yorkers on a wide range of legal issues and successfully represents thousands of tenants in housing court each year.

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