



Women's Shelters Sued by Men's Group

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For immediate release

Press contact:

Lovisa Stannow, tel: (310) 478-5330, cell: (310) 617-4350

CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

PRESS RELEASE

SUING SHELTERS FOR BATTERED WOMEN FAILS TO PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF MEN

It's outrageous, but it's true: ten emergency shelter organizations in Southern California have been sued by individuals affiliated with the National Coalition of Free Men. The lawsuit alleges that these ten organizations engage in unlawful gender discrimination by not allowing men into their shelters for battered women and children. As a remedy, the lawsuit seeks a court order forcing them to admit men.

The shelters in question are based in Artesia, Canoga Park, Carson, Claremont, Glendale, Los Angeles, Newhall, Pasadena, and San Pedro.

"These shelters offer a refuge for women who fear for their lives and the health of their children," explained Marci Fukuroda, Staff Attorney at the California Women's Law Center, which represents the majority of the organizations in this lawsuit. "It's saddening that a group like the National Coalition of Free Men, which claims to be concerned about battered men, has chosen to launch an attack on groups saving the lives of abused women."

Domestic violence is a problem that cuts across race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, and economic status. Nevertheless, according to the Department of Justice, women accounted for 85 percent of all victims of intimate partner violence in the U.S. in 2001. Every day, more than three women are killed, and countless others are threatened and abused by their intimate partners. In a country where domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions, shelter services are desperately needed.

Because domestic violence is such an enormous problem, the California legislature has passed laws to provide state funding for shelters serving battered women and their children. All the organizations being sued receive such funding. Despite their efforts, however, tens of thousands of women are turned away every year in California alone because the shelters are full.

The urgent need to provide shelter to battered women and their children does not negate the importance of services for abused men. Men also suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners and are sometimes in need of shelter services. Currently, there is an organization in Lancaster that provides emergency shelter to battered men and women. One of the primary reasons this organization is able to serve both men and women is that it has separate facilities for male and female victims, a clinical necessity. None of the shelters being sued has such separate facilities.

“Suing overburdened shelters that are saving the lives of battered women and their children will not improve services for battered men. Nor does it address a genuine problem of sex discrimination,” continued Fukuroda. “This lawsuit serves only to further jeopardize the emotional and physical safety of all victims of domestic violence in need of emergency shelter.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN’S LAW CENTER OR A SHELTER REPRESENTATIVE, PLEASE CONTACT LOVISA STANNOW, TEL: (310) 478-5330, CELL: (310) 617-4350.