



## **Domestic Violence Victims Will No Longer Be Evicted** *First Settlement of Its Kind in Michigan*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 10, 2003

Contact: Kary Moss, (313) 578-6813

DETROIT – In a precedent-setting settlement, the Ypsilanti Housing Commission (YHC) has agreed to end a policy that led to the eviction of domestic violence victims. The YHC had relied on a “one-strike rule” in its lease that permitted it to evict tenants if there was any violence in a tenant’s apartment – even if the tenant was the victim of the violence.

“Ending this policy will prevent women from being twice victimized, first by an abuser and again by the housing authority,” said Kary Moss, ACLU of Michigan Executive Director. “This settlement should send a message to landlords throughout the state that they cannot throw women out on the street because they are victims of domestic violence.”

In 2002, the ACLU filed a case in both federal court and Washtenaw County Circuit Court on behalf of Aaronica Warren, a single mother and then-VISTA volunteer who was living in public housing run by the Ypsilanti Housing Commission (YHC).

On February 29, 2000, after Ms. Warren had put her son down to bed, a former boyfriend forced his way into the apartment and immediately became abusive. He threw Ms. Warren into the entertainment center and then picked her off the ground, dragged her outside and threw her face first into the pavement.

Ms. Warren called the police to report the assault. When the YHC learned about the incident, it went to court in an unsuccessful attempt to evict Ms. Warren and her son from the apartment.

The ACLU argued in its lawsuits that since victims of domestic violence are almost always women, the policy of evicting domestic violence victims was unlawful sex discrimination in violation of the federal fair housing act and the Michigan civil rights law.

Under the settlement agreement, the YHC has agreed to no longer enforce the no-strike rule against domestic violence victims. It also agreed to pay Ms. Warren money damages for the stress and humiliation she faced in having to defend against the eviction.

“I’m grateful that nobody else will have to go through the humiliation of facing eviction because they get attacked in their own apartment,” said Ms. Warren. “I thought the housing commission would help me, but instead they tried to throw me and my son out on the street.”

Pam Kisch, director of the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County, who worked on the case with the ACLU said, “Congratulations to Aaronica Warren on her victory. She has opened the door for all victims of domestic violence who have been evicted or denied housing because they have been battered.”

While the settlement was the first of its kind in the state and the second in the country, it is not the first time the ACLU has heard of this practice.

“We have received reports of landlords evicting domestic violence evictions in other parts of the state, including Oakland County and Ingham County,” said Michael J. Steinberg, legal director of the Michigan ACLU. “If this settlement does not deter landlords from continuing this horrendous practice, we stand ready to file additional cases.”

In 2001, a similar case was settled in a case filed against a private landlord in Oregon by the Department of Justice, the National ACLU and others. See <http://www.aclu.org/WomensRights/WomensRights.cfm?ID=10235&c=173>.

The case was litigated by ACLU Cooperating Attorneys Debra McCulloch, William Thacker and Michael Honeycutt from the law firm of Dykema Gossett.