

NEWS RELEASE

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Attorney General Bonta Demands City of El Cajon Immediately Rescind Warning Notices Sent to Hotels Participating in San Diego County's Voucher Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Alleges City of El Cajon's actions constitute unlawful housing discrimination in violation of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act

OAKLAND – California Attorney General Rob Bonta yesterday sent a letter demanding that the City of El Cajon immediately rescind warning notices sent to local hotels participating in the County of San Diego's bridge housing voucher program. The program provides payment assistance to qualifying individuals experiencing homelessness to allow them to temporarily stay in participating hotels while looking for permanent housing. Despite the fact that this program is unquestionably legal, the City of El Cajon has accused participating hotels of unlawfully operating emergency shelters and threatened fines of up to \$1,000 a day. In the letter, the Attorney General warns the City that these notices constitute unlawful discrimination in violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act and must be corrected.

"Every day, millions of Californians worry about keeping a roof over their head, and there are too many across this state who lack housing altogether," **said Attorney General Bonta**. "The City of El Cajon's recent actions threaten to turn some of San Diego County's most vulnerable residents out onto the street based solely on their source of income – vouchers provided by the County to cover the cost of temporary housing at local hotels. Let me be clear: Housing discrimination in any form will not be tolerated. The City of El Cajon's threats to local hotels are a clear violation of the law, and the City must immediately reverse course or face legal consequences."

The Attorney General has become aware of reports that the City of El Cajon has ordered local hotels to immediately reduce capacity of guests paying for rooms through San Diego's bridge housing voucher program, and in some cases, has apparently banned hotels from accepting these vouchers altogether. As part of

this effort, the City has also reportedly mobilized its police department to investigate hotel guests, following new guests into their rooms and interrogating guests on where they have come from.

In a letter sent yesterday to the El Cajon Mayor and City Council, the Attorney General alleges the City's actions constitute clear violations of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, which forbids housing discrimination based on income source, as well as other protected characteristics. Not only do the bridge housing vouchers clearly represent a lawful, verifiable source of income under California law, but the City's actions threaten to restrict housing opportunities for San Diego County's unhoused population, which is disproportionately disabled, older, and Black. In light of these facts, the Attorney General demands that the City of El Cajon take immediate action to:

- Rescind the warning notices sent to participating hotels;
- Agree to refrain from issuing such notices in the future;
- Publicly state that hotels will not be subjected to punishment from the City if they accept such vouchers; and
- Order its law enforcement officers to immediately cease any unlawful harassment of hotel guests at participating hotels.

Attorney General Bonta is committed to advancing housing access, affordability, and equity in California, including protecting and promoting tenants' rights. In November, Attorney General Bonta [announced the creation of the Housing Strike Force](#) and [launched a Housing Portal](#) on DOJ's website with resources and information for California homeowners and tenants. The Housing Strike Force encourages Californians to send complaints or tips related to housing to housing@doj.ca.gov. To find a free legal aid attorney in your area, visit <https://lawhelpca.org>.

A copy of the letter is available [here](#).