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United States
Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board

1331 F Street, NW • Washington, DC 20004-1111 • 202-272-5434 (Voice) • 202-272-5449 (TDD) • 202-272-5447 (FAX)

October 26, 2000

Mr. Nelson French, Director
White Mountain Catholic Charities
Saint Anthony's Convent
6 N. McQuatters Avenue
P.O. Box 552
McNary, Arizona 85930

Dear Mr. French:

I am writing regarding The Dispossessed Outreach Project's plans to seek assistance from the Arizona Department of Commerce to develop housing for people with multiple chemical sensitivities and electrical sensitivities in West Yavapai County. The Access Board is a federal agency whose mission is to promote accessibility for people with disabilities. We develop accessibility guidelines for the built environment, transit vehicles, and telecommunications equipment, and standards for electronic and information technology. Our guidelines are adopted by other federal agencies as enforceable standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Architectural Barriers Act, and Telecommunications Act. We also enforce accessibility standards for federally funded facilities.

Over the years, the Access Board has learned about the very important needs of people with multiple chemical sensitivities and electrical sensitivities. We have heard from thousand of people across the country who are sensitized to chemicals and electromagnetic, radio, and cell phone emissions and who cannot safely use facilities because of chemicals released from building materials and furnishings, exposure to certain types of electrical equipment and systems, and cleaning products and pesticides commonly used in operating and maintaining buildings. The Access Board is initiating a major project to examine the needs of people with multiple chemical sensitivities and electrical sensitivities as they relate to indoor environmental quality, and to develop an action plan to address those needs. We will be involving people with multiple chemical sensitivities and electrical sensitivities, the building industry, and other federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, in the project. We also are developing technical assistance materials that will focus on best practices for addressing the needs of this population.

Based on our experience, I can state that there definitely is a need for specially planned and designed housing for people with multiple chemical sensitivities and electrical sensitivities. There are many people with these and related disabilities whose condition is so severe that they cannot live in conventional housing. We recently visited Ecology House, an 11-unit apartment;

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The Access Board

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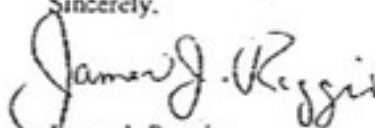
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development in San Rafael, California; talked with its residents; and learned first hand about the special design and construction practices that have made the project habitable for people who could not tolerate other housing. The housing project being planned by The Dispossessed Outreach Project would build on the experiences of Ecology House and meet a real need for healthy and affordable housing by people who have no other choices.

If I can be of further assistance, please call me at (202) 272-5451

Sincerely,



James J. Raggio
General Counsel

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