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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

Alameda County Allows Racketeering at the Expense of the Poor

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA – Today Equal Justice Under Law filed a federal class action lawsuit in the Northern District of California against Alameda County for allowing a private company, Leaders in Community Alternatives (LCA), to extort money from poor Californians and about the predatory practices LCA inflicts through the use of GPS tracking devices.

LCA, a for-profit company owned by SuperCom, consistently put its financial interests before the well-being of those under its control, regardless of their personal circumstances - while Alameda County turns a blind eye to low-income residents being charged $25 per day. At no cost to the County, Alameda has been deferring associated GPS monitoring costs by contracting with LCA to provide the court ordered services, meaning LCA must make its profit from the people sentenced to its program - which entails a one pound device being attached to a defendant’s ankle. The Named Plaintiffs in the lawsuit, and many others, were forced to pay a daily rate far higher than they could afford, in violation of California law.

One named plaintiff, William Edwards, who suffers from cancer, was threatened by LCA to “violate” him when he could not make a payment, despite him being incapable of receiving the medical care he needs from prison. Another plaintiff, Robert Jackson, was sentenced to LCA when his wife tragically passed away leaving him as the sole parent to three children. LCA took half of his pay during his sentence and refused to remove the ankle device until he paid another $800. This excessive monetary burden forced Jackson to sell his car and separate his children – moving them to family and friends homes so he could use his apartment deposit to pay LCA.

Executive Director of Equal Justice Under Law, Phil Telfeyan says, “LCA’s abuse of the people under its supervision shows yet again the toxic result when counties delegate their criminal justice responsibilities to private companies. This ‘pay-or-jail’ scheme is unconstitutional and allows LCA to prey upon people when they are extremely vulnerable.”

The lawsuit alleges that LCA’s policy of threatening people to force them to pay more than they can afford amounts to racketeering and seeks treble damages under the federal RICO Act. It also claims that putting criminal justice supervision in the hands of a private entity motivated by profit violates the 14th Amendment. The Plaintiffs also allege that Alameda County is liable for damages for allowing LCA to engage in its predatory practices.

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Equal Justice Under Law is a legal nonprofit providing pro-bono legal services to those most in need. The organization is dedicated to achieving equality in our justice system by litigating for change in the most pressing areas of wealth-based discrimination. Since its founding in 2014, Equal Justice Under Law has filed 32 lawsuits in twelve states and the District of Columbia targeted at ending unequal practices in our justice system. For more information contact: Chrysse Haynes, Director of Communications chrysse@equaljusticeunderlaw.org