

September 6, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

The undersigned local, state, and national organizations and local governments urge you to reject any amendment that zeroes out or shifts funding away from the private-public enforcement partnerships between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and local private fair housing organizations. Representative Steve Stivers' Amendment #27 to the FY18 HUD appropriations bill would shift all available funding for the Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) component of the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to the Administrative Enforcement Initiative, a long-defunct and redundant grant program within FHIP. Doing so would effectively neuter enforcement of the Fair Housing Act in localities across the nation and deny families the freedom to live where they desire. We strongly urge you to vote against Mr. Stivers' amendment.

FHIP is a competitive grant program administered by HUD that provides funding to private fair housing organizations to address pervasive discrimination in the housing, rental, sales, lending and insurance markets. FHIP is made up of three primary grant categories: the Education and Outreach Initiative (EOI) grant is used to educate the general public about their fair housing rights and train housing providers to understand their fair housing responsibilities; the Fair Housing Organizations Initiative (FHOI) grant is used to fund the creation of new organizations and build the capacity and efficacy of existing agencies; and the Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) grant supports qualified private fair housing agencies efforts to test for discrimination, conduct complaint intake, and assist victims and their families.

PEI is an irreplaceable component of the nation's effective enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. In 1987, a bipartisan Congress and Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush recognized the need to support the development of experienced private nonprofit fair housing organizations to foster compliance with the Fair Housing Act and to complement the work of local and state government agencies and the federal government. The result has been a long-standing history of private-public partnerships with the federal government and private fair housing agencies. The FHIP program, and specifically its PEI component, has successfully met that need. In 2016 alone, PEI-funded fair housing agencies investigated 70 percent of reported complaints, more than double the number of complaints investigated by local, state, and federal government agencies combined.

Through the PEI component of the FHIP program, private fair housing agencies provide informed and rapid-response assistance to victims of discrimination without the red tape associated with the administrative and legal requirements of formal complaints. This allows for tailored and effective investigations and means that only cases supported by independent testing and investigation proceed to the complaint stage. By vetting claims of discrimination, PEI-funded organizations not only ensure that victims of actual housing discrimination have their chance at justice but they also save taxpayer dollars by unburdening the nation's judicial and administrative systems that meritless lawsuits and costly mediations create.

Mr. Stivers' amendment would cause redundancies in federal spending. The Fair Housing Act allows the HUD Secretary to reimburse local and state government agencies for jurisdictional complaints they investigate through the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP). This was done to foster cooperation between HUD and state and local agencies that enforce local laws that are substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act. It is noteworthy that decades after the passage of the Act, Congress deemed it necessary to develop the FHAP program to compliment FHAP.

The Fair Housing Initiatives Program is severely weakened when the Private Enforcement Initiative component is rendered useless. Mr. Stivers' amendment would not only undermine the expertise that private enforcement agencies have to address discrimination, but it would keep victims of discrimination from accessing much-needed assistance that helps them get and their families back on a path toward prosperity. We strongly urge you to vote against Mr. Stivers' amendment.

Sincerely,

Local and State Organizations and Local Governments	City	State
Housing Rights Center	Los Angeles	CA
Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, Inc.	Riverside	CA
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California	San Rafael	CA
Project Sentinel	Santa Clara	CA
City of Thornton	City of Thornton	CO
Colorado Black Arts Festival	Denver	CO
Denver Metro Fair Housing Center	Denver	CO
Connecticut Fair Housing Center	Hartford	CT
Sandhill Acres Home Owners Association	Georgetown	DE
Good Neighbor Society	Gainesville	FL
Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.	Miami	FL
Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches	Palm Beach County	FL
Fair Housing Continuum, Inc.	Rockledge	FL
Fair Housing Center of West Palm Beaches	West Palm Beach	FL
Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.	Atlanta	GA
Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc.	Atlanta	GA
The SOPOS Coalition	Atlanta, GA	GA
Savannah-Chatham County Fair Housing Council, Inc.	Savannah	GA
Idaho State Independent living Council	Boise	ID
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.	Boise	ID
Disabilty Action Center - NW, Inc.	Moscow	ID
Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago	Chicago	IL
CEDA	Chicago	IL
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance	Chicago	IL
Housing Action Illinois	Chicago	IL

Immigrant Advocacy Project	Chicago	IL
Metropolitan Tenants Organization	Chicago	IL
Northside Community Resources	Chicago	IL
Full Circle Communities	Chicago	IL
Northwest Side Housing Center	Chicago	IL
Center for Independent Futures	Evanston	IL
Evanston Minority Business Consortium, Inc.	Evanston	IL
League of Women Voters of Evanston	Evanston	IL
Citizens' Network of Protection	Evanston	IL
Community Partners for Affordable Housing	Highland Park	IL
South Suburban Housing Center	Homewood	IL
Village of Park Forest	Park Forest	IL
Housing Opportunity Development Corporation	Techny	IL
Open Communities	Winnetka	IL
Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities	Indiana	IN
accessABILITY Center for Independent Living	Indianapolis	IN
Back Home in Indiana Alliance	Indianapolis	IN
Coburn Place Safe Haven	Indianapolis	IN
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana	Indianapolis	IN
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Indianapolis	IN
Prosperity Indiana	Indianapolis	IN
Trusted Mentors	Indianapolis	IN
Hamilton County Area Neighborhood Development Inc.	Noblesville	IN
Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center	New Orleans	LA
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center	Holyoke	MA
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc	Baltimore	MD
Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit	Detroit	MI
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan	Grand Rapids	MI
Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan	Kalamazoo	MI
Community Stabilization Project	Saint Paul	MN
Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council	St. Louis	MO
Montana Fair Housing, Inc.	Butte	MT
Community Development Commission	Kannapolis	NC
High Plains Fair Housing Center	Grand Forks	ND
New York Association on Independent Living	Albany	NH
Fair Housing Council of Northern New Jersey	HACKENSACK	NJ
Housing & Community Development Network of NJ	Trenton	NJ
Silver State Fair Housing Council	Reno/Las Vegas	NV
Long Island Housing Services, Inc.	Bohemia	NY
Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc.	Buffalo	NY
Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc.	New York City	NY

CNY Fair Housing	Syracuse	NY
Home HeadQuarters, Inc.	Syracuse	NY
Jubilee Homes of Syracuse, Inc.	Syracuse	NY
Fair Housing Advocates Association	Akron	OH
Housing Opportunities of Greater Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH
Housing Research & Advocacy Center	Cleveland	OH
Central Ohio Fair Housing Association, Inc.	Columbus	OH
Coalition on Homelessness & Housing in Ohio	Columbus	OH
First 202 Housing Corp.	Dayton	OH
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.	Dayton	OH
Northwest Priority Board (NWPB)	Dayton	OH
Rebuilding Together Dayton	Dayton	OH
The HomeOwnership Center of Greater Dayton	Dayton	OH
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality	Dayton/Toledo	OH
Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc.	Painesville	OH
The Ability Center of Greater Toledo	Toledo	OH
The Fair Housing Center	Toledo	OH
Fair Housing Council of Oregon	Portland	OR
Allentown Housing Authority	Allentown	PA
Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania	Fort Washington	PA
Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern PA	Philadelphia	PA
Benefits to Work	Nashville	TN
Tennessee Council of the Blind	Nashville	TN
Tennessee Disability Coalition	Nashville	TN
Tennessee Fair Housing Council	Nashville	TN
The BridgeCrossers, Inc.	Nashville	TN
North Texas Fair Housing Center	Dallas	TX
Greater Houston Fair Housing Center	Houston	TX
Disability Law Center	Salt Lake City	UT
Housing and Development Advisors	Richmond	VA
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia	Richmond	VA
Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity	Richmond	VA
Virginia Equal Housing Foundation	Richmond	VA
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance	Spokane	WA
Fair Housing Center of Washington	Tacoma	WA
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council	Milwaukee	WI

National Organizations

Center for Responsible Lending
Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center
DePaul University

Housing Choice Partners
LCValley Indivisible
NAACP
National Association for Black Veterans, Inc., Colorado State Command
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Organization of African Americans in Housing
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Shared-Use Mobility Center