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 FHIP 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**

- Housing Rights Center
- Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, Inc.
- Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California
- Project Sentinel
- City of Thornton
- Colorado Black Arts Festival
- Denver Metro Fair Housing Center
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Sandhill Acres Home Owners Association
- Good Neighbor Society
- Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.
- Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches
- Fair Housing Continuum, Inc.
- Fair Housing Center of West Palm Beaches
- Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.
- Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc.
- The SOPOS Coalition
- Savannah-Chatham County Fair Housing Council, Inc.
- Idaho State Independent living Council
- Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.
- Disability Action Center - NW, Inc.
- Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago
- CEDA
- Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
- Housing Action Illinois

**City**
- Los Angeles
- Riverside
- San Rafael
- Santa Clara
- City of Thornton
- Denver
- Hartford
- Georgetown
- Gainesville
- Miami
- Palm Beach County
- Rockledge
- West Palm Beach
- Atlanta
- Atlanta, GA
- Savannah
- Boise
- Boise
- Moscow
- Chicago
- Chicago
- Chicago
- Chicago

**State**
- CA
- CA
- CA
- CA
- CO
- CO
- CT
- DE
- FL
- FL
- FL
- FL
- GA
- GA
- GA
- ID
- ID
- ID
- IL
- IL
- IL
- 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  Indianapolis  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
Home HeadQuarters, Inc.
Jubilee Homes of Syracuse, Inc.
Fair Housing Advocates Association
Housing Opportunities of Greater Cincinnati
Housing Research & Advocacy Center
Central Ohio Fair Housing Association, Inc.
Coalition on Homelessness & Housing in Ohio
First 202 Housing Corp.
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.
Northwest Priority Board (NWPB)
Rebuilding Together Dayton
The HomeOwnership Center of Greater Dayton
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality
Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc.
The Ability Center of Greater Toledo
The Fair Housing Center
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Allentown Housing Authority
Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania
Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern PA
Benefits to Work
Tennessee Council of the Blind
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Tennessee Fair Housing Council
The BridgeCrossers, Inc.
North Texas Fair Housing Center
Greater Houston Fair Housing Center
Disability Law Center
Housing and Development Advisors
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia
Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity
Virginia Equal Housing Foundation
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance
Fair Housing Center of Washington
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council

Syracuse NY
Syracuse NY
Syracuse NY
Akron OH
Cincinnati OH
Cleveland OH
Columbus OH
Columbus OH
Dayton OH
Dayton OH
Dayton OH
Dayton OH
Dayton OH
Dayton OH
Dayton/Toledo OH
Painesville OH
Toledo OH
Toledo OH
Portland OR
Allentown PA
Fort Washington PA
Philadelphia PA
Nashville TN
Nashville TN
Nashville TN
Nashville TN
Nashville TN
Dallas TX
Houston TX
Salt Lake City UT
Richmond VA
Richmond VA
Richmond VA
Richmond VA
Spokane WA
Tacoma WA
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