

# Leading Civil Rights Groups Commend President Joe Biden's Executive Action to Advance Fair Housing and Racial Equity

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 26, 2021

## **Contacts:**

**National Fair Housing Alliance:** Izzy Woodruff, 202-898-1661,  
IWoodruff@nationalfairhousing.org

**National Consumer Law Center:** Jan Kruse, jkruse@nclc.org

Washington, D.C. — Today, leading civil rights groups commended President Joe Biden for taking action to advance racial equity for Americans in the first days of his term. The civil rights community asked the Biden-Harris Administration to take this critical step — to name racial justice as a key pillar of a comprehensive strategy to advance equality in the U.S. and help undo the legacy and damage caused by centuries of discriminatory and unfair policies and practices. In issuing the Memorandums and Executive Orders, President Biden stated, “We need to make equity and justice part of what we do every day.” He also vowed to “make progress to eliminate systemic racism in every branch of the White House and the federal government.”

Civil rights groups voiced support, in particular, for the fair housing-related executive action, “Redressing Our Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies,” which recognizes the central role the federal government has played in implementing and continuing discriminatory housing practices throughout the United States. It also directs the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to look into the negative impacts the previous administration had on fair housing policies and laws, and ensures HUD will take the necessary steps to fully implement the Fair Housing Act and its requirements.

The four executive actions were signed to:

- Direct HUD to take steps necessary to redress racially discriminatory federal housing policies that have contributed to wealth inequality for generations;
- End the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) use of private prisons;
- Commit the government to respecting Tribal sovereignty and strengthen the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the United States and Tribal Nations; and
- Combat xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

We applaud the Administration and are encouraged by its commitment to addressing systemic discrimination and upholding fair and equitable housing policies.

“Where you live matters because place is inextricably linked to opportunity,” **said Lisa Rice, President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance.** “Unfortunately, housing segregation remains the primary driver of inequality in the U.S., where neighborhoods of color are less likely to have well-resourced schools, living wage jobs, healthcare facilities, full-service groceries, fitness centers, green spaces, and bank branches, but more likely to have hazardous and toxic facilities, and polluted land, air, and water. We are glad that the Biden-Harris Administration understands these structural barriers to housing equity and intends to be a partner in implementing fair housing priorities that ensure everyone has access to decent, affordable housing in healthy, vibrant, well-

resourced communities free from discrimination. We look forward to continuing this important work together.”

“We applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for issuing today’s Presidential Memorandum, an important first step in returning the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to its critical role in enforcing the Fair Housing Act and ensuring that Black and Brown communities are not discriminated against. The Trump Administration’s targeting of multiple housing protections, including the disparate impact rule and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule, will need to be fully analyzed to understand the real impact of those actions and HUD must move quickly to reverse the harmful impacts it discovers,” said **Lisa Cylar Barrett, Director of Policy, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.**

“President Biden took actions today that constitute a critical first step by his administration to address injustices that are holding our country back. Prioritizing racial equity is needed at the outset and fully implementing the Fair Housing Act of 1968 as part of a comprehensive racial equity agenda is essential to expanding opportunity for all Americans. These actions give Black and brown families an opportunity to live free of discrimination and participate fully in the economy. We look forward to working with the new administration in a continued focus on racial equity,” said **Nikitra Bailey, Executive Vice President, Center for Responsible Lending.**

“We applaud President Biden’s Memorandum ‘Redressing Our Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies,’” said **Diane Glauber, Director, Fair Housing and Community Development, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.** “This is an important first step to ensuring that HUD commits to its mandate to affirmatively further fair housing and undertakes the restoration of the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule.”

“Marginalized communities, especially those of color, have suffered because of the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s irresponsible attempts to weaken the Fair Housing Act and other protections during the previous administration. Though progress has been set back by years, we are pleased to see that the Biden Administration is taking immediate action to promote fair housing and opportunities to individuals and families. We will continue to advocate for more protections to address the systematic racism by housing providers, financial institutions, and insurance companies that deprive people of the services and opportunities they need,” said **Rob Randhava, Senior Counsel, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.**

“President Biden’s executive orders on racial equity are an important step forward in addressing systemically racist practices in housing, financial services, and criminal justice,” said **Richard Dubois, Executive Director of the National Consumer Law Center.** “For too long, communities of color have been denied wealth building opportunities, stripped of resources, and unable to build a financial buffer to withstand the financial harm, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Consumer Law Center looks forward to working with the Biden Administration to fight discrimination and advance the rights of all consumers to access fair and sustainable financial products and services.”

“We applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for swiftly addressing equity and working to erase the damage done by the last administration,” said **Shamus Roller, Executive Director, National Housing Law Project.** “Criminal justice disparities, government-sanctioned policies like redlining, and entrenched patterns of segregation make identifying and ending housing discrimination extremely difficult. Despite progress made to expand housing opportunities since the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, housing discrimination is still very real across the country, and this action takes us in the right direction.”

“We are glad to see the Administration’s recognition of systemic racism and the deep and pernicious impacts it has had across generations, including in our housing policies. This must be a call not only to undo the damage of the last administration, but to fully and affirmatively harness our government’s own programs for fair housing and racial justice. Together with our civil rights partners, we look forward to engaging with HUD, Transportation, Treasury and other agencies on these crucial issues,” said **Megan Haberle, Deputy Director, Poverty & Race Research Action Council.**

“We applaud President Biden for the actions he took today to advance racial equity and support underserved communities, including the Executive Order on Redressing Our Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies. We appreciate his recognition of the role the federal government has played in creating and perpetuating housing segregation and exclusion.” said **Linda Jun, Senior Policy Counsel at Americans for Financial Reform.** “At a time when communities of color are bearing the brunt of the devastation from the COVID-19 pandemic, in part because of the continuing effects of housing and economic discrimination, we appreciate the administration’s commitment to combating racial inequality and look forward to working with the Biden Administration on specific measures to advance housing equity and justice.”

“I applaud President Biden for signing four executive orders today that will help advance the goal of racial equity,” said **Jesse Van Tol, CEO of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.** “The order directing HUD to address the nation’s long history of systemic racism in housing is of particular importance to us. Acknowledging the federal government’s role in perpetuating segregation, including the lasting impacts of redlining, is essential to addressing America’s ever growing racial wealth divide. Home ownership is the cornerstone of the American Dream. It is the primary way that families accumulate wealth, and it has long been denied to people and communities of color. Giving HUD the authority to re-evaluate past measures and make changes to advance fair housing, combat housing discrimination and fully enforce the Fair Housing Act, is the right first step.”

“NLIHC applauds President Biden for taking action to advance racial equity in housing,” stated **Diane Yentel, President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.** “The executive order signed today is an important step in the right direction. Decades of racist federal housing and transportation policies created today’s segregated communities, with tremendous negative consequences for Black Americans, other people of color, and the entire country. NLIHC and our members and partners look forward to working with President Biden and the HUD Secretary-designate to not only reverse President Trump’s efforts to gut fair housing and civil rights protections, but to advance anti-racist housing policies to eliminate the racial discrimination and racial disparities reflected in America’s housing and homelessness crisis.”