

November 18, 2022

Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer
United States Senate
Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Leader Schumer:

The undersigned local and national organizations write you to express deep concern about the ongoing vacancy of the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) position at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and we urge you to prioritize confirmation of David Uejio to fill the role. HUD's FHEO Assistant Secretary is an essential leadership position at the heart of HUD's mission and purpose of ensuring that our nation's housing market equitably serves everyone and is responsible for managing HUD's extensive fair housing and civil rights activities, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring HUD's administrative complaint and investigation processes effectively serve victims of discrimination;
- Initiating agency complaints into systemic forms of housing and lending discrimination and change market behavior; and
- Ensuring HUD's own programs comply with the Fair Housing Act and other civil rights laws.

This role is more important than ever, as our nation grapples with an ongoing housing crisis including – racial homeownership disparities that contribute to a widening racial wealth gap, fair and affordable housing challenges, and growing inflation propelled by rising housing costs which threatens families' ability to pay for food, healthcare, and other important life necessities.

The global COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep-seated unmet needs in our society, and our organizations know too well the disproportionate harms that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on people of color, women, families with children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. Access to decent, safe, accessible, and affordable housing is key to surviving and thriving during this ongoing crisis. Just in the last reporting year alone, the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) reported the following rates of housing discrimination:

- A 29 percent increase in complaints of discriminatory harassment, including the highest number of harassment complaints since NFHA began collecting detailed harassment data in 2021, and concentrated most heavily among people with disabilities, women, and people of color;
- 54.6 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination based on disability status;
- 16.8 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination based on race; and

- 7.9 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination against families with children.¹

These instances of housing discrimination have disrupted the lives of people throughout the nation, throwing them into housing instability and, in some cases, homelessness during a global pandemic. These ongoing forms of discrimination are the results of centuries of policies and practices, including government-sponsored segregation, housing discrimination, and financial exclusion, which continue to negatively affect people of color. This history is the bedrock of inequality today, as neighborhoods of color that have experienced disinvestment are more likely to have poorly resourced schools and fewer amenities like healthcare facilities, grocery stores, green spaces, and bank branches. At the same time, communities of color are more likely to have hazardous and toxic waste plants and more polluted land, air, and water. Discrimination and segregation lie at the root of the disparities we see related to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which Black,² Latino,³ and Native American⁴ people were hospitalized for and dying from the coronavirus at 2 to 4 times the rate of Whites. Fair housing organizations across the country also have reported elevated violence and harassment against Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, consistent with national trends.

Our nation's economy also faces significant challenges rooted in housing discrimination, most notably in the discriminatory valuation of real estate and other property. Reports of home appraisal discrimination have revealed systemic discrimination and the dangers of our nation's property valuation system. To date, local nonprofit fair housing organizations have done the lion share of [fair housing enforcement](#) and have filed several [lawsuits](#) challenging discriminatory appraisals. In these lawsuits, families of color who have been skeptical of an appraisal have had to "whitewash" their home to receive a fair and more accurate valuation. These lawsuits are symptoms of a systematically poor governance structure and appraisal standards, and an almost entirely homogenous industry with no fair housing training that is unaccountable to the public compared to other housing industry players.

Earlier this year, NFHA was commissioned by the Appraisal Subcommittee to undertake a study about [Appraisal Criteria and Appraiser Standards including appraisal bias](#). In that study, NFHA documented systemic challenges that drive appraisal bias, highlighted several areas of concern, and made recommendations to overhaul the appraisal system to address discrimination and inequities. Currently, there is no effective or reasonable process available to homeowners to enforce their rights under federal or state law if they believe they have received a discriminatory or negligent valuation.

¹ See National Fair Housing Alliance, "2021 Fair Housing Trends Report," July 2021, available at <https://nationalfairhousing.org/resource/2021-fair-housing-trends-report/>.

² See Scott Neuman, "COVID-19 Death Rate For Black Americans Twice That For Whites, New Report Says," NPR, Aug. 13, 2020, available at <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/08/13/902261618/covid-19-death-rate-for-black-americans-twice-that-for-whites-new-report-says#:~:text=Black%20Americans%20are%20becoming%20infected,data%20from%20Johns%20Hopkins%20University..>

³ See Centers for Disease Control, "Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death By Race/Ethnicity," Mar. 12, 2021, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigationsdiscovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

The impact of appraisal discrimination cannot be understated - housing is a major component of our nation's annual GDP, and discrimination in the valuation of residential property jeopardizes the safety and soundness of our entire economy. The importance of the HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity in this context cannot be underestimated. The Assistant Secretary for FHEO is responsible for enforcing the Fair Housing Act, and for creating and implementing policies that reverse discrimination which contributes to the nation's widening racial homeownership and related wealth gaps, the housing affordability crisis, and the disproportionate harms of the pandemic on people of color, women, families with children, and people with disabilities. It is therefore of the utmost importance that you move to confirm David Uejio as HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity without any further delay.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

National Fair Housing Alliance
Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund
Asian American Real Estate Association of America (AREAA)
Center for Community Progress
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Responsible Lending
Consumer Action
Liberation in a Generation
NAACP
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
National Community Stabilization Trust
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Resource Center
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Urban League
Prosperity Now
Revolving Door Project

State and Local Organizations

Organization	City	State
Fair Housing Center of Northern Alabama	Birmingham	AL
Southwest Fair Housing Council	Tucson	AZ
California Reinvestment Coalition	San Francisco	CA
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California	San Rafael	CA
Housing Equality Law Project (HELP)	South San Francisco	CA
Project Sentinel	Santa Clara	CA
Connecticut Fair Housing Center	Hartford	CT
HOND, INC	Wilmington	DE
Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches	West Palm Beach	FL
Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.	Miami	FL
Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc.	Atlanta	GA
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.	Boise	ID
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center	New Orleans	LA
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center	Holyoke	MA
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition	Baltimore	MD
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan	Grand Rapids	MI
High Plains Fair Housing Center	Grand Forks	ND
CNY Fair Housing, Inc.	Syracuse	NY
Fair Housing Justice Center	Long Island City	NY
HOME, Inc.	Buffalo	NY
Long Island Housing Services, Inc.	Bohemia	NY
NHS Brooklyn CDC, INC.	Brooklyn	NY
Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.	White Plains	NY
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Greater Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH
Housing Research & Advocacy Center dba Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research	Cleveland	OH
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.	Dayton	OH
Fair Housing Advocates Association	Akron	OH
Fair Housing Council of Oregon	Portland	OR
Fair Housing Rights Center in SEPA	Philadelphia	PA
Fair Housing Council of Greater San Antonio	San Antonio	TX
North Texas Fair Housing Center	Dallas	TX
Hampton Roads Community Action Program	Hampton	VA
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia	Richmond	VA
Fair Housing Center of Washington	Tacoma	WA
Mountain State Justice, Inc.	Charleston	WV