

February 9, 2022

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

Dear Senate Leader Schumer,

The undersigned local fair housing organizations working in communities across the nation write you to express deep concern about the ongoing vacancies of several Assistant Secretary positions at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and we urge you to prioritize confirmation of the current nominees for these positions. Presently, and after a full year since the beginning of the Biden Administration, vacancies remain for Federal Housing Administration Commissioner (FHA Commissioner), Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (Assistant Secretary of FHEO), and Assistant Secretary of Policy Development and Research (Assistant Secretary of PD&R) – all essential leadership positions that are at the heart of HUD’s mission and purpose of ensuring that our nation’s housing market and economy thrive and serve every person equitably. Our nation currently faces multiple crises – a widening racial wealth gap, a deep housing affordability crisis, and an ongoing health pandemic that continues to exacerbate the former two. It is therefore of the utmost importance that you move to quickly confirm Julia Gordon, David Uejio, and Solomon Greene so that they may begin to implement President Biden’s promise to usher in an equitable recovery from these various overlapping crises.

Our organizations know too well the disproportionate harms that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on people of color, women, and people with disabilities. We also know that access to decent, safe, 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 serious states of housing instability and, in some cases, homelessness

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

during a global pandemic. While these rates of discrimination are undoubtedly exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they stem from our nation's past policies of government-sponsored segregation, housing discrimination, and financial exclusion, which continue to negatively affect people of color today. 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 are hospitalized for and dying from the coronavirus at 2 to 4 times the rate of Whites.

These disparities are also why people of color are disproportionately more likely to be renters as opposed to homeowners, and why people of color in both categories are more likely to fall into financial distress and potential homelessness. In March of 2021, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reported that Blacks and Latinos are more than twice as likely to report being unable to meet their monthly housing payments.⁵ Nine percent of renters reported the likelihood of evictions, and 28 percent of residents in manufactured housing reported an inability to pay rent in comparison with 12 percent of single-family home residents and 18 percent of residents in small multi-family units.⁶ Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. faced an affordable housing crisis. Most families are spending upwards of 30 percent of their incomes on rent, with some spending as much as 50 percent. And among homeowners, the gap between the Black and White homeownership rates in the U.S. has increased to its highest level in 50 years, from 28.1 percentage points in 2010 to 30.1 percentage points in 2017.⁷ Most alarmingly, this gap is wider than it was when race-based discrimination against homebuyers was legal.

The roles that the FHA Commissioner and the Assistant Secretaries of FHEO and PD&R play in addressing our overall recovery cannot be underestimated, as each of those positions is essential to guiding their respective HUD divisions to create and implement policies that address the

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.

⁵ See Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, "Housing insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic," Mar. 1, 2021, available at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/housing-insecurity-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.

⁶ Id.

⁷ See Jung Hyun Choi, "Breaking Down the Black-White Homeownership Gap," Urban Institute, Feb. 21, 2020, available at <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/breaking-down-black-white-homeownership-gap>.

widening racial homeownership and 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 Julia Gordon as FHA Commissioner, David Uejio as HUD Assistant Secretary of PD&R, and Solomon Greene as HUD Assistant Secretary of FHEO without any further delay.

Sincerely,

Organization	City	State
CNY Fair Housing, Inc.	Syracuse	NY
ERASE Racism	Syosset	NY
Fair Housing Justice Center	Long Island City	NY
Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc.	Buffalo	NY
Long Island Housing Services, Inc.	Bohemia	NY
Westchester Residential Opportunities	White Plains	NY
Fair Housing Center of Northern Alabama	Birmingham	AL
Southwest Fair Housing Council	Tucson	AZ
The Arizona Fair Housing Center	Mesa	AZ
CSA San Diego County	El Cajon	CA
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California	San Rafael	CA
Fair housing Council of Orange County	Santa Ana	CA
Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, Inc.	Riverside	CA
Greater Napa Valley Fair Housing Center	Napa	CA
Housing Equality Law Project (HELP)	South San Francisco	CA
Connecticut Fair Housing Center	Hartford	CT
Open Communities Alliance	Hartford	CT
The Equal Rights Center	Washington	DC
Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches	Lantana	FL
Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.	Miami	FL
Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc.	Atlanta	GA
Savannah-Chatham County Fair Housing Council, Inc.	Savannah	GA
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.	Boise	ID
HOPE Fair Housing Center	Wheaton	IL
Open Communities	Evanston	IL
UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center	Chicago	IL
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, Inc.	Indianapolis	IN
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center	New Orleans	LA
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan	Grand Rapids	MI
WITH ACTION	University City	MO

High Plains Fair Housing Center	Grand Forks	ND
New Jersey Citizen Action	Newark	NJ
Central Ohio Fair Housing Association, Inc.	Columbus	OH
Housing Research & Advocacy Center dba Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research	Cleveland	OH
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.	Dayton	OH
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.	Dayton	OH
Fair Housing Advocates Association	Akron	OH
Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	PA
Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	PA
Fair Housing Council of Greater San Antonio	San Antonio	TX
Greater Houston Fair Housing Center	Houston	TX
North Texas Fair Housing Center	Dallas	TX
HOME of VA, Inc.	Richmond	VA
Piedmont Housing Alliance	Charlottesville	VA
Fair Housing Center of Washington	Tacoma	WA