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April 14, 2022

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Fair Share Housing Center Applauds Secretary Marcia Fudge’s Internal Directive to Evaluate HUD Policy Barriers to Housing for Individuals with Justice System Involvement

New Jersey’s Fair Chance in Housing Act Provides a Model Framework for How HUD Can Further Protect Individuals with Prior Criminal Legal System Involvement from Housing Discrimination

NEW JERSEY – Earlier this week, HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge issued a memo to senior agency staff directing them to review all policies and guidance documents within the next six months that bar people with criminal records from housing. In response to this announcement, Fair Share Housing Center issued the following statement.

Adam Gordon, Executive Director, Fair Share Housing Center:

“We are pleased to see HUD taking steps to eliminate barriers to housing for people with prior criminal legal system involvement and commend Secretary Fudge for her leadership on this issue. Our experience in New Jersey has shown us that these types of policies do very little to promote public safety, and instead create an insurmountable roadblock for thousands of individuals who are trying to rebuild their lives. The racial implications of these policies are also profound given that people of color are disproportionately arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated throughout the United States. Such policies uphold structural racism and must be dismantled in our pursuit to create a more equitable nation.

Just last year, New Jersey passed the Fair Chance in Housing Act which can serve as a model framework for HUD as they undergo a review of internal policy. The first statewide law of its kind in the country, the Fair Chance in Housing Act prevents landlords from asking about an individual’s criminal background on an initial housing application, and then creates a tiered framework with lookback periods that require an individualized review after a conditional offer of housing is made. New Jersey’s Office of the Attorney General is already enforcing the law, and recently issued seven cease and desist letters to housing providers in violation. New Jersey is leading the nation on this issue, and can provide helpful guidance as HUD considers improvements to their policies.”

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Fair Share Housing Center is a nonprofit advocacy organization that uses litigation and policy strategies to dismantle decades of racial and economic discrimination in New Jersey and nationally that excludes people from the opportunity to live in safe, healthy, and affordable housing.