



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of
REALTORS®

March 4, 2020

Vince Malta
2020 President

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The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David E. Price
Chair
House Subcommittee on
Transportation, and Housing and
Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on
Transportation, and Housing and
Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
404 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Lowey, Granger, Price, and Diaz-Balart:

The 1.4 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® support increased funding for fair housing activities in the FY 2021 budget. Specifically, NAR supports increases in Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to support private non-profit enforcement of the Fair Housing Act (the Act) and increased salaries and expenses for HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHIO), the primary federal office charged with administration of the Act.

NAR has already expressed its support for H.R. 149, offered by Representative Al Green, which provides \$58 million for FHIP in FY2021. H.R. 149 would increase the funding for private fair housing enforcement activities by 30 percent, a meaningful increase for a program that currently constitutes a small percentage of HUD’s overall budget. At a minimum, NAR believes FHIP needs level funding at the FY2020 level, with any appropriate adjustments for inflation.

NAR supports a strong FHIP program, in recognition that paired testing, as conducted by qualified fair housing organizations, is critical to exposing and redressing unlawful housing discrimination. Without paired testing, which provides documentary evidence of how housing providers treat people of different backgrounds, many would never be aware of the ongoing discrimination in the sales and rental markets. NAR supports efforts to ensure testers are well trained, and adhere to the highest standards. Poorly-conducted tests unfairly tarnish our members and the reputations of the entire fair housing community. We strongly support Representative Green’s proposal that HUD develop standards that promote high-quality testing throughout FHIP. We also believe the quality of FHIP work depends significantly on HUD’s timely execution of grant agreements. Increased funding for HUD’s Office of FHIO will ensure HUD has sufficient personnel to administer this critical fair housing program. Also, as FHIP brings cases to HUD, more staff for FHIO will ensure those cases are quickly and impartially investigated.

The fight against housing discrimination is essential to the creation of a thriving housing market. Research by the Urban Institute and the Metropolitan Planning Council has shown that less segregated communities are not only more inclusive but more prosperous (<https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/less-segregated-communities-arent-only-more-inclusive-theyre-more-prosperous>). They promote higher household income



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for racial minorities, less crime, and higher education attainment and longer life expectancy for people of all backgrounds. All of these factors produce better environments for homeowners.

Finally, NAR supports \$23.9M for the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP), as proposed in the President's FY2021 budget. FHAP reimburses State and local governments for the projected number of complaints those agencies will investigate under state and local laws substantially-equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act.

Increases in FHIP and FHEO are consistent with NAR's ACT! initiative which calls for greater accountability, culture change, and training among our industry. We are pleased to support this bill which promotes the interests of all our members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vince Malta", written in a cursive style.

Vince Malta

2020 President, National Association of REALTORS®