



March 6, 2018

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Regulations Division  
Office of General Counsel  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 Seventh Street SW, Room 10276  
Washington, DC 20410-0500

**Re: Docket No. FR-5173-N-15**

**Notice: Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing: Extension of Deadline for Submission of Assessment of Fair Housing for Consolidated Plan Participants**

I am writing on behalf of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), a statewide organization in Massachusetts that advocates for affordable housing and equitable community development.

We believe the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) requirement is critical to federal efforts to advance fair housing, expand housing choice and create neighborhoods of opportunity. We urge HUD to rescind the January 5, 2018 notice extending the deadline for the submission of AFHs for Consolidated Plan Participants to 2020 and beyond (an estimated 900 of 1,200 jurisdictions will not need to submit an AFH until 2024).<sup>1</sup> In addition to withdrawing the notice, we urge you to move ahead with implementation and enforcement of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. We also urge you to request Congress to provide adequate resources to advance the promise of fair housing.

If you choose to maintain the deadline extension, we urge you to shorten it and adopt a faster timetable for full implementation of the AFH requirement. While the January notice suggests that you are only seeking comments related to the AFH tool for local governments,<sup>2</sup> it lists a number of additional barriers in justifying the extended deadline, including the need for technical assistance and guidance. We urge you to keep the current tool and act more expeditiously to address those barriers.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nlihc.org/article/hud-posts-faqs-about-suspension-assessment-fair-housing-submissions>

<sup>2</sup> "Although HUD is issuing this notice for applicability immediately upon publication, it also invites public comment for a period of 60-days on the extension. HUD will consider all the comments in its ongoing process of reviewing the Assessment of Fair Housing Tool for Local Governments." <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-01-05/pdf/2018-00106.pdf>

“HUD believes that local government program participants need additional time and technical assistance from HUD to adjust to the new AFFH process and complete acceptable AFH submissions. HUD also believes it can use this time to improve its Data and Mapping Tool (AFFH-T) and the User Interface (AFFH-UI). The extension period allows HUD to further refine its materials to provide additional guidance to program participants. Finally, this extension allows HUD staff to devote additional time to providing program participants, and program participants in an AFH collaboration, with technical assistance on the legal objective to affirmatively further fair housing.”

We believe the current Tool, developed over years of consultation with stakeholders, is a good one. At least 14 localities were able to develop accepted AFHs, including one in Massachusetts (Somerville), and are implementing them. Other municipalities, including Boston, were far along in the AFH drafting process, and could have achieved acceptance under the rule.

We urge you to encourage localities to pursue AFH acceptance using the current tool and approval process. One inexpensive way to promote AFH adoption would be to post all the accepted AFHs in one place on HUD’s website, along with contact information.

A second action HUD could take to advance the process would be to fund an intermediary to provide technical assistance to localities interested in proceeding under their previous deadline, and in particular, to provide examples of accepted regional AFHs. A third action would be to highlight the potential of partnerships with local college and universities in developing AFHs.

Again, we urge you to rescind the notice suspending AFH submission deadlines, or at least shorten the term of postponement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Heller".

Rachel Heller  
Chief Executive Officer