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Fair Housing Center Releases Report Showing Significant Levels of Housing Discrimination in Indianapolis Metro Area

INDIANAPOLIS – A report released today by the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) reveals many Hoosiers continue to experience significant levels of housing discrimination 45 years after the landmark federal Fair Housing Act became law.

The FHCCI conducted a “Fair Housing Rental Testing Audit” to measure the nature and extent of discrimination due to race, national origin, disability and the presence of minor children. This was the first such audit in the Indianapolis metropolitan area. The audit evaluated the scope of housing discrimination and showed how those who unlawfully discriminated did so.

“Fair housing has been the law of the land for almost half a century, but this testing audit shows staggering levels of discrimination,” stated Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana. “The results of the FHCCI’s testing are grounds for serious concern. The need for affordable, accessible and safe housing is frequently mentioned in government reports about housing impediments, but little attention has been paid to the problems of those Hoosiers who are subject to unfair and unlawful treatment in their search for housing.”

The FHCCI conducted a total of 52 fair housing tests for the audit. Over half of the tests showed evidence of discrimination in violation of fair housing laws. In areas that are predominantly Caucasian, otherwise qualified African Americans encountered discrimination 82% of the time, and otherwise qualified Hispanics/Latinos encountered discrimination 70% of the time.

The audit uncovered a disturbingly common occurrence in which persons of color were told incomplete or untrue information by housing providers. Frequently, white testers, despite being slightly *less* qualified than corresponding African American or Hispanic/Latino testers, were told of lower deposits, fees and rent. Testers of color were often told that apartments were not available for days, weeks and occasionally months after the date quoted to a corresponding white tester. African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos were more likely to be told of criminal and credit history requirements than white testers and were less likely to be told of specials and discounts.

Families with children experienced discrimination in 20% of their housing searches. For those with disabilities, the audit demonstrated barriers to accessibility in 73% of the complexes tested, including steps into buildings or common-use areas, lack of accessible routes and insufficient accessible parking. If a person needed an animal to help in coping or dealing with a

disability, s/he encountered discrimination such as unlawful fees or deposits in 25% of the tests.

Signed into law in 1968 by President Lyndon Johnson, the federal Fair Housing Act provides protection for persons from housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin and religion. Every April is celebrated as Fair Housing Month to honor the passage of the original law. In 1974, the Act was amended to include gender (sex). President Ronald Reagan then signed the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, which expanded protections to families with children and people with disabilities.

Today, it is unlawful under federal or state fair housing laws to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, ancestry, or familial status in rental housing, real estate sales, lending, insurance, and any financial or other housing-related service.

A copy of the full audit report may be viewed or downloaded on the “News” page of the FHCCI’s website: www.fhcci.org/news-and-cases/

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, nonprofit fair housing organization founded in 2011. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education and outreach.

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