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Fair Housing Center Releases Report Showing Significant Levels of Housing Discrimination in Marion County

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 50 years after the landmark federal Fair Housing Act became law.

The FHCCI recently conducted a “Fair Housing Rental Testing Audit” through funding provided by the City of Indianapolis to measure the nature and extent of rental discrimination due to race and specific accommodation requests for people with disabilities. The audit evaluated the scope of housing discrimination and showed how those who unlawfully discriminated did so. Beyond evaluating existing conditions of housing discrimination, the partnership between the FHCCI and the City of Indianapolis exists to achieve the goal of providing fair housing opportunities to any who are interested in living in Indianapolis.

“Fair housing has been the law of the land for half a century, but this testing audit shows significant levels of discrimination continue,” stated Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana. “The results are very similar to a testing audit we conducted in 2013. The need for affordable, accessible and safe housing remains a significant housing impediment for many Hoosiers who have the additional barrier of being subjected to unfair and unlawful treatment in their search for housing.”

The FHCCI conducted a total of 45 fair housing tests for the audit. In Marion County areas that are predominantly Caucasian, otherwise qualified African Americans encountered discrimination 76% of the time. For those with disabilities, the audit demonstrated barriers to enjoying their housing like those without disabilities. If a person needed an animal to help in coping or dealing with a disability, s/he encountered discrimination, such as additional verification or policy restrictions, in 15% of the tests conducted.

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 testers, were told of lower deposits, fees, and rent, or of move-in specials. Testers of color were often told that apartments were not available for different time periods

from the date quoted to a corresponding white tester, as well as treated differently in on-site appointments or in follow-up. *In not a single test did the person of color receive more favorable treatment.*

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. 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.

The City of Indianapolis is committed to partnering with the FHCCI to end housing discrimination, and will work with the FHCCI in 2018 to further evaluate disparities. In an effort to eliminate discrimination, the City of Indianapolis is offering free fair housing trainings in 2018 that are open to the public. These trainings will be widely publicized to property managers, landlords, and the public. Go to www.fhcci.org/events for dates and locations.

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

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, non-profit fair housing organization founded in 2011 and based in Indianapolis, Indiana. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education and outreach. For more information, visit: www.fhcci.org

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