



GAO FINDS HUD, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS,
NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB TO
AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHER FAIR HOUSING;
ACLU AND FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL AGREE



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On Friday the U.S. Government Accountability Office released its report on Housing and Community Grants. The GAO found - and put as the main conclusion on the title page of the report - that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) "Needs to Enhance Its Requirements and Oversight of Jurisdictions' Fair Housing Plans." Fair housing advocates in Wisconsin agree.

"For years, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council and other groups have worked to ensure there is fair and open housing throughout our region," Bill Tisdale, MMFHC's CEO, stated. "This report shows that we also need HUD to step up and make sure that county and local governments are doing their part."

"Federal law is very clear that if a local government gets money from HUD for things like the Community Development Block Grant or HOME program, it has to analyze the impediments to fair housing in that community," noted Karyn Rotker, Senior Staff Attorney for the ACLU of Wisconsin, which also works on fair housing issues. "And beyond that, it has to take actions to try to reduce those barriers. This isn't just responding to complaints of discrimination - it's taking active steps to create a more inclusive community."

Mr. Tisdale added that "impediments to fair housing" are far broader than just overt expressions of discrimination. "For example, if people in protected groups - like people of color and persons with disabilities - are more likely to need affordable housing, and a community's laws or policies prevent that housing from being built, that is clearly a fair housing impediment. In fact, the GAO report shows it's one of the most common impediments to fair housing around the country - and that's certainly true in Wisconsin."

"We hope this report will be just a first step for HUD to make sure that local governments are complying with the law," added Attorney Rotker. "And we also hope that the governments themselves will start taking these requirements seriously."

The GAO report is available at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-905>