

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL FILES DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT  
AGAINST WAUKESHA COUNTY**

Milwaukee, WI – The Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) has filed a complaint with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) alleging that Waukesha County has engaged in illegal housing discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin, and that the County has violated HUD’s mandate to affirmatively further fair housing.

In order to receive federal funds, including CDBG and HOME dollars, Waukesha County must certify to HUD that it analyzes impediments to fair housing and takes action to overcome identified impediments. MMFHC’s complaint alleges that the County has failed to comply with its own civil rights certifications and has continued funding local governments whose laws and policies perpetuate racial and ethnic segregation. Since 2006, MMFHC alleges, more than \$12,500,000 in federal CDBG and HOME funds has been deployed to 35 individual jurisdictions without adequate consideration for its impact on fair housing choice by people of color. The complaint alleges that the County funding policy has the effect of perpetuating racial and ethnic segregation. Specifically, by continuing to fund jurisdictions – like New Berlin, Brookfield, Menomonee Falls, the City of Waukesha, Mukwonago and others – that have actively prevented the development of affordable housing, the County discourages integration of mostly-white communities.

MMFHC alleges that Waukesha County’s deliberate actions to limit housing development contribute to racial segregation, in that the County and several of its municipalities have blocked the development of affordable housing in order to avoid the effect such housing would have on majority white communities, where it would be perceived to promote integration on the basis of race, color and national origin. The Milwaukee – Waukesha metropolitan area is the most segregated region in the nation for African-Americans and in the top third of large metropolitan areas for residential segregation of Hispanics. While Milwaukee County’s population is racially and ethnically diverse, Waukesha County’s population is starkly homogeneous. Nearly every community in Waukesha County is at least 95% white. A number of Waukesha County municipalities did not include a single African-American in recent census counts.

“Communities do not become and remain all-white by accident. They get that way and stay that way because local governments and private actors erect barriers to racial and ethnic integration,” said William R. Tisdale, MMFHC’s President and CEO. “The only reason the County and local governments are getting these federal housing funds is because they have promised to counteract these forces. Our complaint shines a bright light on their misrepresentations over the past five years.”

MMFHC filed the complaint after several years of working with a coalition of organizations including the ACLU of Wisconsin, Legal Action of Wisconsin, IndependenceFirst, Disability Rights Wisconsin, and Pledl & Cohn, S.C., all of which have a shared goal of increasing housing opportunities throughout Southeastern Wisconsin. Each of these organizations, individually and in concert, has made attempts to promote integration and affordable housing opportunities in Waukesha County. Given the institutional barriers posed by County government and detailed in the HUD complaint, however, coalition members’ efforts were stymied.

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MMFHC is a private, non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote fair housing throughout the State of Wisconsin by combating illegal housing discrimination and by creating and maintaining racially and economically integrated housing patterns. It operates satellite offices in Dane County (the Fair Housing Center of Greater Madison) and in Northeast Wisconsin (the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin).

Persons who feel they may have experienced unfair lending practices or illegal housing discrimination should call 414-278-1240 or 1-877-647-FAIR (a toll-free number for use outside the 414 area code).