



## FHJC 2024-2025 POLICY PRIORITIES

The mission of the Fair Housing Justice Center is to eliminate housing discrimination, strengthen the fair housing laws in the New York City region, and promote policies and programs that foster inclusive communities. We at the FHJC recognize that it is through partnerships and relationship building that we can advance this mission.

In 2024-25, the FHJC will focus on the following initiatives:

### 1. **Strengthening Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws**

#### **Increase Engagement and Funding for Testing and Fair Housing**

**Enforcement:** We will increase our engagement with local, state, and federal government enforcement and advocate for increased funding for qualified, full-service fair housing organizations with expertise in systemic fair housing testing and other fair housing enforcement expertise.

**Fully Enforce Accessibility Requirements:** We back stronger regulation of adult homes and assisted living programs by local, state, and federal government agencies. We will advocate for proactive state and local government inspection of construction plans and new developments to ensure compliance with applicable accessibility requirements and the abandonment of “self-certification” by architects, engineers, or developers.

**Strengthen Vicarious Liability in the NYSHRL:** We encourage New York State to amend Section 296 of the Executive Law to expressly identify vicarious liability as a theory of liability for housing discrimination prohibited by the New York State Human Rights Law. This will allow housing owners and residential real estate agencies, in appropriate circumstances, to be held accountable for the discriminatory conduct of their agents, which will increase

compliance with the nondiscrimination law and help to facilitate systemic change.

**Champion Co-op Disclosure Laws:** We urge the enactment of state and local “Co-op Disclosure” laws, which would require housing cooperatives to provide upon request, and in writing, the reason(s) for rejecting a prospective buyer/renter.

**Regulate Tenant Screening Services:** Tenant screening practices are creating discriminatory barriers to housing access by using inaccurate information, overbroad screening criteria, and algorithmically generated risk scores that lack transparency, accountability, or relevancy, among other suspect practices. We will advocate for regulation and oversight of tenant screening services to protect all renters, with the goal of ensuring equal access to housing, including for those disparately harmed by the screening practices such as people of color, people with disabilities, and people who rely on government assistance.

### **Eliminating Housing Discrimination**

**Add “Conviction Record” to State, City, and Local Laws:** The New York State Human Rights Law prohibits discrimination based on arrest records in housing decisions. We support including “conviction record” as a protected characteristic in housing discrimination provisions in state, city, and local laws.

**Fortify State Law Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Source of Income:** We support legislation to clarify and strengthen source of income provisions in the New York State Human Rights Law. For example, housing providers continue to exclude renters who rely on government assistance by requiring unnecessary background checks and imposing overly rigid income requirements despite the applicant’s secure source of income to pay the rent.

**Fight Credit Discrimination:** We will advocate for the passage of State legislation that prohibits residential landlords from automatically rejecting rental applicants because of their credit history or score.

**Improve Homeowner and Tenant Protections:** We support the enactment of state and local prohibitions on deceptive, predatory, or unfair practices that

have a discriminatory effect in the rental and sales market, such as predatory evictions or the non-renewal of residential leases.

**Encourage the passage of a Federal Source of Income Law:** We support the enactment of a federal source of income law to protect millions of Americans from being denied housing because of their lawful source of income, including recipients of federal, state, and local government assistance.

**Restrict Housing Providers from Demanding Brokers' Fees:** Existing Statutes allow housing providers, such as landlords, sub-lessors, and grantors to charge voucher or subsidy holders brokers' fees. This ultimately deters and restricts individuals and families who use government housing assistance from accessing housing opportunities. We support legislation prohibiting housing providers from charging prospective tenants brokers' fees.

## **2. Fostering Inclusive Communities**

**Advance a Statewide “Equitable Share” Housing Plan:** We seek the enactment of a statewide “Equitable Share” legislative housing plan, which would mandate every community to ensure that at least 10% of its existing housing stock is affordable.

**Establish a New York State Zoning Appeals Board:** We support legislation that would create a Zoning Appeals Board with the authority to override local zoning laws that are discriminatory or present a barrier to the development of affordable housing.

**Legalize and Increase Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** We support the inclusion of fair housing protections in any legislation regarding the regulation, oversight, and production of safe, habitable, and environmentally sound Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which have the potential to expand housing supply and create more inclusive communities.

**Link Fair Housing Advocacy to School Integration:** We advocate for more targeted fair housing enforcement in areas that have well-resourced schools so that increased housing opportunities are available to people of color.