

PRRAC APPLAUDS NEW HUD REGULATION ON “AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING”

WASHINGTON - The Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) commends the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for issuing the new “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing” (AFFH) rule, that will require jurisdictions across the country to examine their past history and current policies of segregation and disinvestment, and take steps to become more inclusive communities.

The rule requires all states, cities, counties, and towns that receive HUD funds to engage in a community dialogue and public planning process every five years, using HUD-supplied data, to assess the barriers to integrated housing, and the steps necessary to remove those barriers. Importantly, the rule also requires jurisdictions to assess the community resources available in low income neighborhoods and communities of color to determine if public resources are being distributed fairly.

“This rule forces us to address the American paradigm of *separate and unequal*,” said Philip Tegeler, the Executive Director of PRRAC. “It asks cities and towns to confront the consequences of their past policies and decide how to move forward in a fair, inclusive and democratic way.”

The “AFFH” rule does not break any new legal ground, because it implements a section of the 1968 Fair Housing Act that has been consistently interpreted by the courts. But it finally clarifies how HUD expects its grantees to respond to this mandate in the federal civil rights law. Some highlights of the rule:

- > The new rule will bring all jurisdictions into compliance with AFFH reporting obligations – replacing the current system of delay, widespread non-reporting, and lack of quality control;
- > The enhanced community engagement elements of the rule will bring many new groups to the table and, over time, open a discussion in thousands of communities about issues of racial segregation, “racially concentrated areas of poverty,” unequal conditions and resources in low income communities, and remedies to segregated housing patterns;
- > The rule brings Public Housing Authorities into the planning process, along with local governments;
- > The rule will ask jurisdictions to take a detailed look at the performance of each of their housing programs;
- > The rule will provide uniform data to jurisdictions on segregation and access to opportunity, thereby enabling local officials to actually address the substantive issues raised by the Assessment of Fair Housing, rather than focusing on data gathering and analysis.

About PRRAC: The Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) is a civil rights policy organization convened by major civil rights, civil liberties, and anti-poverty groups in 1989-90. PRRAC's primary mission is to help connect advocates with social scientists working on race and poverty issues, and to promote a research-based advocacy strategy on structural inequality issues. PRRAC has been actively pressing HUD for a strong and effective AFFH rule since 2008. See www.prrac.org.