



News Release
August 16, 2016, 10:00 A.M.

Report finds that affordable housing program provides limited choice and opportunity for low-income, African-American families.

Almost all affordable rental housing developed through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program for families has been placed in highly-segregated, high poverty areas of Ohio. The LIHTC program has also cut back on the development of housing that serves families with children. These are the findings of a new report prepared for Ohio legal aid and fair housing programs by Abt Associates, a national research firm with expertise in housing.

People on low incomes continue to find it more difficult to find housing they can afford. The LIHTC program is designed to provide families access safe and affordable housing. It helps non-profit and for-profit developers finance affordable housing through federal tax breaks, and it is administered in Ohio by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency.

- According to the report – in Ohio, only 3.8% of LIHTC family units are in census areas with a poverty rate of less than 10%.
- In the Columbus area, there is a concentration of LIHTC units in census areas in which more than 75% of the population is African-American. While such census tracts only include 3% of the Columbus area’s housing units, 20.4% of LIHTC units are placed in these extremely segregated census tracts. More than a third of LIHTC family units are in areas of highly concentrated poverty despite the fact that only 7.5% of all housing is in these census tracts.

“We serve clients who need and want to live where they can have access to opportunities for their families,” explains Janet Hales, Director of the Ohio Poverty Law Center. “Where a child lives during their formative years has a profound influence on their future opportunities. Limiting LIHTC housing only to the poorest and the most segregated areas undermines a parent’s ability to have any choice about giving their children opportunities that will help them succeed. LIHTC housing could be a vehicle for providing people with choices rather than limiting those choices to neighborhoods of deep poverty and segregation.”

A recent survey from the Housing Research & Advocacy Center, a fair housing organization in Cleveland, confirms that low-income voucher tenants want to have access to good schools in safe neighborhoods. According to Carrie Pleasants, Executive Director of Housing Research & Advocacy Center “development through the LIHTC program should not be limited to the poorest and most segregated areas; it should improve tenants’ access to housing choice. Unfortunately, the report from Abt shows that the program has not met these goals.”

The legal aid and fair housing programs continue to support efforts to preserve existing affordable housing and community reinvestment, which is woefully underfunded, and they support the continued creation of permanent supportive housing options for people who need it. This report should not be read to challenge continued investment in those communities.

Instead, according to Jeniece Jones, Executive Director of Housing Opportunities in Cincinnati, “the Abt report shows the historical imbalance in the awards and should be a call to

improve placements and allow people more choice in housing. We need both place-based and mobility strategies to address this basic need for local families. OHFA must address historical imbalance in its LIHTC funding through its future awards.”

Legal aid programs and fair housing organizations in Ohio represent clients and communities that seek and support fair housing choice through the LIHTC program. They include Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc., Central Ohio Fair Housing Association, Community Legal Aid Services, Inc., Fair Housing Contact Service, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Housing Research & Advocacy Center, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, The Legal Aid Society of Columbus, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC, Ohio Disability Rights Law and Policy Center, Inc., Ohio Poverty Law Center, Southeastern Ohio Legal Services, and Toledo Fair Housing Center.

News Contact: Janet Hales, Director, Ohio Poverty Law Center, 614-824-2501