



ARLINGTON BRANCH #7047
NAACP

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January 20, 2021

Hon. Matt de Ferranti
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Ste 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Draft Fair Housing Plan

Dear Mr. de Ferranti,

In the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. this year marks the 52nd year the Fair Housing Act, which Congress passed one week after the assassination of Dr. King in 1968. Dr. King dedicated the last years of his life to fighting housing discrimination and government policies that created segregation and trapped blacks in high-poverty neighborhoods. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, or sex.

In Fall 2020, Arlington County released a draft Fair Housing Plan for public comment to comply with the spirit of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. Unfortunately, the plan fails to live up to the requirements of the 2015 rule, soon to be reinstated by the Biden Administration, and fails to demonstrate a real commitment by Arlington County to address long standing disparities between white residents and residents of color. Depending on the color of your skin and the neighborhood in which you live, Arlington residents face sharp disparities in employment, education, income, and health. What should have been a serious attempt to address the ongoing legacy of discrimination and segregation in Arlington's housing market appears to be little more than a bureaucratic paperwork exercise.

The data is clear. Arlington's 2019 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice shows how Black residents living in Modified Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs) are being failed by our community. Residents in R/ECAPs face significantly higher poverty rates, lower life expectancies, higher housing cost burdens, lower incomes, higher unemployment, lower school proficiency rates, and generally lower homeownership rates. These neighborhoods are the direct result of racist policies and practices perpetrated for years by the Federal, Virginia, and Arlington County governments with active support from the private market. While many of these policies and practices have ended, their discriminatory legacy lives on. Shame on our community if we allow this opportunity to address these longstanding injustices pass us by.

We call on the County Board and the County Manager to work with the Arlington Branch NAACP and other community and civil rights organizations to develop serious and comprehensive solutions for inclusion in the Fair Housing Plan. At the very least, the plan must include specific targets tied to each goal that will allow members of the public to judge the success or failure of Arlington's policies to affirmatively further fair housing. We also insist that the county institute a whole-of-government approach to addressing these issues as they involve not just housing but public health, human services, human rights, and many other departments and offices. We stand ready to assist the county in developing a responsible Fair Housing Plan that pays more than lip service to the Equity Resolution passed by the County Board in 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julius D. Spain Sr.".

Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr.
President

cc. Elected Members of the County Board
Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Samia Byrd, Chief Race and Equity Officer, Deputy County Manager
Anne Venezia, CPHD Housing Director
Housing Committee, Arlington Branch NAACP
Members, Arlington Branch NAACP