



The Hon. Takis Karantonis
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Office of the Arlington County Manager
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Fair Housing Enforcement

Dear Chair Karantonis and Mr. Schwartz,

The NAACP Arlington Branch (the “NAACP”) has been leading the fight to end housing discrimination in Arlington County. This is a critical part of our mission as the nation’s oldest civil rights organization. We again call on the Arlington County Board and County Manager to prioritize ending housing discrimination in our community. New data from fair housing testing conducted in 2024 and 2025 shows that housing discrimination is a very real and persistent issue in Arlington County. While the county has taken some steps to address it—adoption of the Regional Fair Housing Plan in 2023, adopting Source of Funds as a protected class in 2024, conducting Fair Housing Testing in 2024, and adding \$35,000 to the FY 2026 budget for fair housing education and enforcement—much more is needed to ensure our residents do not face discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, color, sex, gender identity, marital status, religion, national origin, elderliness, disability (physical or mental), familial status, or source of funds.

The [2024 Fair Housing Testing Report](#) released by Arlington County last month shows that out of the 4 protected classes tested, discrimination ranged from 6% to 40%. We don’t have data on discrimination levels for the other 8 protected classes because Arlington County has not tested for them; the county conducted no testing between 2019 and 2024. Below is a summary of the county’s testing results:

- **Disability Tests: Evidence of potential discrimination in 1 test out of 15 (6%)** singlesided phone tests and 3 inclusive tests that merit future re-testing
- **Familial Status Tests: Evidence of potential discrimination in 2 tests out of 10 (20%)** matched-pair phone tests and 2 inconclusive tests that merit future retesting
- **National Origin Tests: Evidence of potential discrimination in 4 tests (and 1 retest) out of 20 (20%)** matched pair email rental tests and 5 in-person matched pair tests which were inconclusive

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- **Source of Funds Tests: Evidence of potential discrimination in 6 tests out of 15 (40%)** single-sided phone tests and one inconclusive test that merits future retesting

In addition to Arlington County’s testing in 2024, the Housing Rights Initiative conducted 110 tests to identify Source of Funds discrimination in 2025 and **found evidence of potential discrimination in 30 (27.2%)** tests. While Source of Funds was only added to Arlington’s Human Rights Ordinance as a protected class in 2024, it has been illegal under Virginia Fair Housing Law since 2020. The new testing data supports focus group feedback found in Arlington County’s [2025 Arlington Housing Choice Voucher Program Five-Year Plan Community Engagement Sessions: Key Findings Report](#) which shares the experiences of Arlington’s Housing Choice Voucher recipients. The focus group members reported adverse treatment and discrimination because they used government vouchers including:

- Some participants feel stigmatized or prejudiced against by landlords and maintenance staff for renting with a voucher.
- Some participants feel access to amenities and treatment from property management staff is of lower quality for affordable renters. Many feel that reporting violations often falls on deaf ears.
- All participants...felt they had to “settle” for an affordable unit vs. having different options. Many feel tied to their current property because they believe they won’t get approved to rent elsewhere with their voucher.
- Some participants feel discriminated against by their apartment complexes because they have children or children with disabilities.
- Some participants believe that buildings rush to address maintenance issues when they know that the County is coming for inspections, but when tenants need something fixed, maintenance takes a very long time. Common concerns included broken elevators, lack of hot water, doors that won’t close, pests, and mold.
- Some participants said that property managers and leasing staff are frequently rude and won’t listen to their needs. Some participants feel they are particularly subject to retaliation against reporting problems because they receive affordable housing assistance.

While the testing data is new, our calls on Arlington County to address the significant housing discrimination in our community are not. We have heard stories of housing discrimination from renters at properties across the county. What we have also heard is that renters do not know their rights under fair housing laws, do not know how to report housing discrimination or assert their rights, and are hesitant to file claims because they are afraid of retaliation from their landlords. The NAACP calls on the County Board and County Manager to take the following urgent actions:

1. **Amend the Human Rights Ordinance to make it consistent with the federal Fair Housing Act and Virginia Fair Housing Law.** In December 2024, the NAACP and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) of Virginia sent a [letter](#) to the County Board outlining specific changes to the Human Rights Ordinance that are needed to strengthen its fair housing protections and make it consistent with the federal Fair Housing Act. These changes are critical to ensuring that the county has the authority and tools to end housing discrimination in Arlington.
2. **Work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to become a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) participant** while HUD is still accepting new

applicants. This will unlock training and organizational support to enhance fair housing enforcement as well as access to federal funds for fair housing cases.

3. Prioritize fair housing enforcement and education in the Office of Human Rights.

Arlington has an opportunity to be a leader in the region and the commonwealth in ending housing discrimination as the Federal government abandons most of its own efforts to enforce the Fair Housing Act. Prioritizing resources, training, and collaboration across departments is essential to ending housing discrimination in our community and the successful implementation of the Regional Fair Housing Plan.

Arlington County has a responsibility to ensure that residents can fairly access safe, quality, and affordable housing. As our residents lose access to reliable fair housing enforcement at the federal level, it is imperative that Arlington County step up to be a leader in ending housing discrimination across our community.

Sincerely,

DeLishia A. Davis

Rev. DeLishia Davis
Branch President

Kathleen A. McSweeney

Kathleen McSweeney
Branch Secretary

cc. Gurjit Chima, Assistant County Manager for the Office of Human Rights, EEO & ADA
Samia Byrd, Director, CPHD
Anita Friedman, Director, DHS
Anne Venezia, Housing Director, CPHD
Nicole Dula, Housing Bureau Director, DHS
Arlington Housing Commission
Arlington Human Rights Commission
Arlington Tenant-Landlord Commission
Arlington County NAACP Executive Committee & Members