



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

5555 CONNER ST. | SUITE 1017
DETROIT | MI 48213
(313) 963-1274
www.fairhousingdetroit.org



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MISSION

The Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that supports and encourages equal housing opportunities in the greater Detroit metropolitan area. Established in 1977 by community members who participated in a “Coalition to End Discrimination in Housing” and, under the leadership of Cliff Schrupp, the Center’s founder and first director, the Fair Housing Center is the oldest fair housing center in Michigan and one of the oldest fair housing centers in the nation. Cliff later authored the *Local Fair Housing Center Organizing Project: Organizing Instructions and Materials*, a guide that was used to establish about twenty other fair housing centers throughout the United States.

The Center’s mission is to ensure equal access to housing without discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, and all other protected class categories under federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws and ordinances.

From 1977 to the present, the Fair Housing Center has strived to fulfill its mission by engaging in the following activities: providing assistance to individuals pursuing legal rights and remedies related to fair housing; offering housing assistance and counseling; providing community outreach, education and fair housing training; and performing research in the area of housing.

The Fair Housing Center has been the recipient of numerous awards for its fair housing services. At the national level, the Center received a Fair Housing Testing Award from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and a Best Practices Award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At the state level, the Center was the first awardee of the Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award from the State Bar of Michigan.




PROGRAM ACTIVITIES


FAIR HOUSING TRAINING & EDUCATION

As in prior years, the Fair Housing Center provided fair housing training to hundreds of staff, management and legal counsel for municipalities, property owners, management companies, realtors, industry groups and private individuals.

The Center provided statewide fair housing training for Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) agents who administer housing choice vouchers (or Section 8 vouchers) statewide to approximately 28,000 to households, which included about 60,000 residents. The Center also provided fair housing training for legal service attorneys statewide addressing remedies in fair housing cases.




**Federal Bar Association
Lunch & Learn**



**Federal Bar Association
Civil Rights
Law Section**

Making a Federal (Civil Rights) Case Out of Evictions



DISABILITY RACE SEX COLOR NATIONAL ORIGIN RELIGION FAMILY STATUS

Tuesday, January 7, 2020 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM*
Theodore Levin Courthouse
231 W. Lafayette, Room 115
Detroit, MI 48226

Moderator:
Hon. Judith E. Levy – U.S. District Court for the E.D. Michigan

Panelists:

- ❖ **Hon. Nancy M. Blount** – Chief Judge, 36th Judicial District, State of MI
- ❖ **Elizabeth Benton** – Attorney & Co-Principal Invest. "Mich. Evictions"
- ❖ **Steve Tomkowiak** – Executive Dir., Fair Housing Center of Metro Detroit
- ❖ **Heidi Naasko** – Pro Bono & Diversity Counsel, Dykema LLC

The Center also participated with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights in conducting fair housing training addressing the needs of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities. The Fair Housing Center conducted training and education across the state, including Detroit, Ann Arbor, Lansing, and Grand Rapids.

The Center's education and training efforts continued despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Transitioning to online platforms, the Center participated in a "Fair Housing Town Hall" sponsored by the Greater Metropolitan Association of Realtors (GMAR). Center staff also provided fair housing training to the Real Estate Investment Association of Detroit, reviewing the historical timeline of fair housing in Michigan and then turning to current fair housing topics. The Center also participated in training for the Michigan Realtors® 2020 Leadership Academy Class, a talented group of leading realtors.

**Fair Housing Matters: The Challenges of Housing Access
in a Racially Divided Nation During COVID-19**

Thursday, August 13, 2020, 1:00 to 4:05 PM EDT, via Zoom

ALL TIMES EDT

1:00 PM - 1:05 PM:	Welcoming Remarks by IAQHRA President Robin Toma
1:05 PM - 1:25 PM:	Remarks by HUD FHEO Assistant Secretary Anna María Fariás
1:25 PM - 1:30 PM:	Remarks by HUD FHAP Director Joseph Pelletier
1:30 PM - 2:20 PM:	<p><u>Unique Fair Housing Issues Presented by COVID-19</u></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Paul Valenti, Pinellas County (FL) Office of Human Rights</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u> Professor Michael Seng, UIC John Marshall School of Law Michael Allen, Esq., Relman Colfax, LLC Amy Nelson, Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana</p>
2:20 PM - 3:10 PM:	<p><u>Best Agency Practices in the Age of Pandemic</u></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Melody Taylor, HUD Regional Director/NFHTA Senior Advisor</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u> Jeffrey May, International Development & Planning, LLC Steve Tomkowiak, Esq., Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit Akita Smith-Evans, DC Office of Human Rights</p>
3:10 PM - 4:00 PM:	<p><u>Fair Housing & COVID-19 as seen through Race and Gender Equity Lenses</u></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Jean Kelleher, Alexandria (VA) Office of Human Rights</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u> Stella Adams, SJ Adams Consulting Lisa Rice, National Fair Housing Alliance Megan K. Whyte de Vasquez, Esq., U.S. Department of Justice</p>
4:00 PM - 4:05 PM	<p><u>Re-Introduction of National Fair Housing Training Academy</u> Melody Taylor, HUD Regional Director/NFHTA Senior Advisor</p>
4:05 PM	<u>Close by IAQHRA President Toma</u>

At the national level, the Center's director participated in the Internal Association of Official Human Rights Agencies' (IAOHRA) national conference, entitled "Fair Housing Matters: The Challenges of Housing Access in a Racially Divided Nation During COVID-19".

With the Board's approval, the Center's director served as the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) representative in curriculum development and instruction as part of HUD's online relaunch of the National Fair Housing Training Academy.



**National
Fair Housing**
TRAINING ACADEMY

FAIR HOUSING ADVERTISEMENTS

The Center continues to place advertisements in print and electronic media. These ads seek to inform the public regarding fair housing.

Two advertisements are shown below.

This detects smoke.



We detect smokescreens.

Housing discrimination isn't always obvious.
These are the kinds of smokescreens you might run into:

"Sorry, we've changed our minds about selling."
"We just rented that apartment."
"It doesn't look like you qualify for the loan."

Contact us if you believe
you have been the victim
of housing discrimination

313-963-1274 fairhousingdetroit.org

Your Choice. Your Right. Your Home. 

Fair Housing Center
of
Metropolitan Detroit

**I WAS DENIED
HOUSING
BECAUSE I HAVE AN
ASSISTANCE
ANIMAL.**



So I contacted
the Fair Housing
Center of
Metropolitan
Detroit for help.

When a landlord tried to deny me housing because of my assistance animal, I contacted the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit and learned about my fair housing rights. For instance, landlords must make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, such as allowing an assistance or emotional support animal in a no pets building. If you believe you have experienced discrimination, contact the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit and file a complaint.

Fair Housing Center
of
Metropolitan Detroit

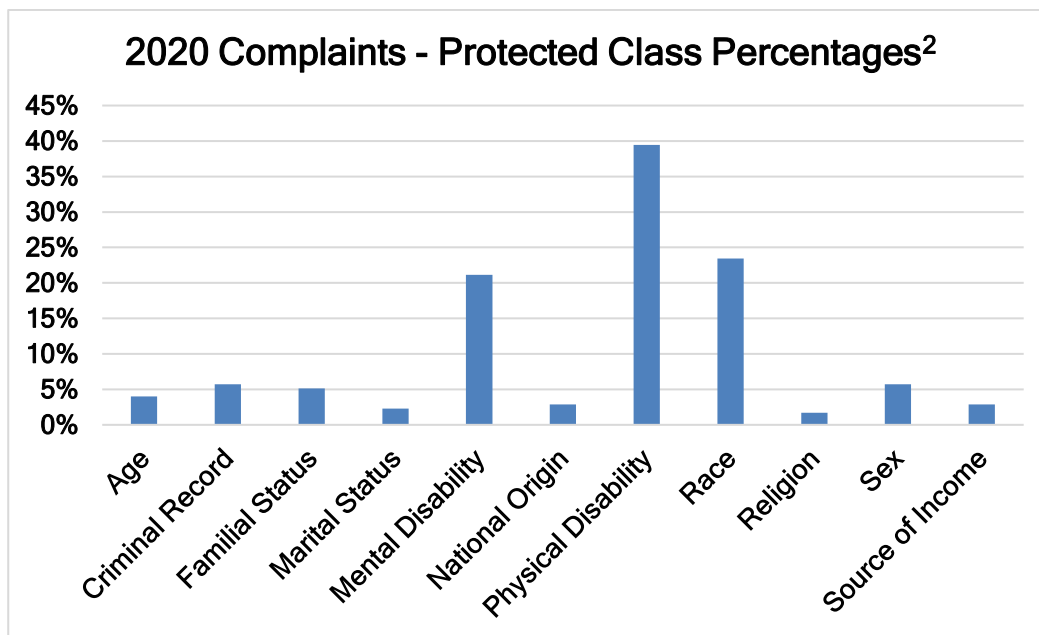
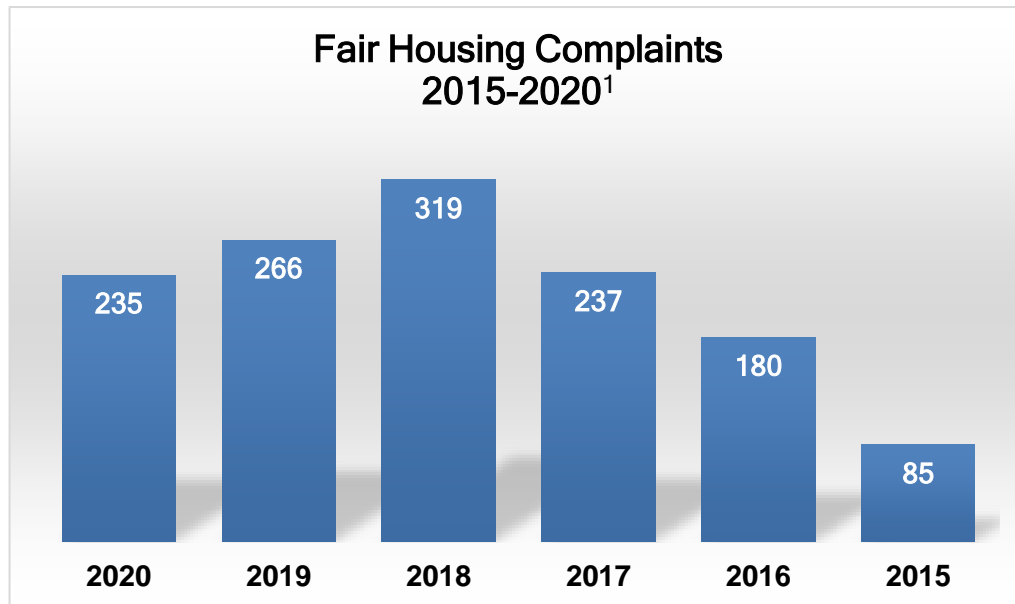
Fair Housing Is Your Right. Use It!

313-963-1274
fairhousingdetroit.org 

FAIR HOUSING COMPLAINTS

Housing Discrimination Complaints

The following chart lists the Fair Housing Center's fair housing complaint intake for this year and the previous five years:



¹The total number of fair housing complaints for 2020 is estimated based on Center's January-October 2020 data.

²Complaints may allege discrimination based on more than one protected class category.

This Center's discrimination complaint intake slowed for a few months as a result of the pandemic. This was offset by the Center's need to answer questions and provide information concerning eviction moratoriums and other pandemic related concerns.

To date, the Fair Housing Center has received over 8,000 complaints of fair housing violations. After investigating, the Center both assisted in and initiated approximately 500 litigations, recovering over \$11 million to remedy fair housing violations. An estimated \$1.5 to \$2 million has also been recovered by victims in non-disclosed settlements. The Center also helped thousands of others obtain the housing of their choice without the necessity of litigation.

Familial Status Discrimination

Families with children still face discrimination by landlords in Metropolitan Detroit. Recently, the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit investigated complaints received from two families with children, resulting in the filing of two federal court lawsuits. Both lawsuits were filed by the Center's cooperating attorney, Carron Pinkins, Esq., of Pinkins & Pinkins, PLLC, in Detroit, MI. Attorney Pinkins has a unique perspective after having served for years as a fair housing tester for the Center.

Both cases involve direct evidence of discrimination. In the first lawsuit, Bonnie Bright relocated from Portland, Oregon, with her 3-year-old daughter. Bonnie found an available 3-bedroom upper flat in Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, owned by Cheryl Flaisher. Ms. Flaisher found that Bonnie met all income, credit and background check requirements to qualify for rental. After being approved by Ms. Flaisher as a tenant, Bonnie paid the security deposit and prepared to relocate to Michigan. A couple of days later, however, Ms. Flaisher revoked the rental offer because "her lower tenant preferred a single person". Ms. Flaisher, in a text message, said that she made this decision even though Bonnie and her daughter "are both so adorable".



In the second lawsuit, Megan Czerwinski and her 2-year-old daughter needed to relocate because the rental property they were living in was going through foreclosure proceedings. Megan saw an online listing for a rental home in Westland, Michigan, owned by Sharon Gallagher. After Megan mentioned in an email that she was raising her 2-year-old daughter, Ms. Gallagher wrote that she was “looking for tenants with no children.” When Megan asked why, Ms. Gallagher explained the property was an “empty nester property only.”

Attorney Pinkins filed the first lawsuit on May 26, 2020 and the second on August 4, 2020. Both cases have been filed with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. The cases are pending before U.S. District Court Judges Stephanie Dawkins Davis and Paul D. Borman.

Disability Discrimination

Clients in drug treatment programs are protected from housing discrimination. HUD’s fair housing regulations define “physical or mental impairment” to include “drug addiction (other than addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance) and alcoholism.”

Unfortunately, discrimination against those in drug treatment programs still occurs.

In May 2020, a federal lawsuit was also filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. The lawsuit, alleging disability

"Guiding Clients From the Darkness of Addiction Since 1990"

PNLH's Mission is:

" To be an innovative and effective behavioral healthcare corporation (utilizing the Personalized Nursing LIGHT Model) that strives for excellence clinically as well as administratively. Specifically, our intent is to:

- Increase client well-being.*
- Decrease addiction severity.*
- Improve the quality of clients' mental health.*
- Improve clients' primary physical health.*
- Contribute positively to society.*

All services will integrate substance use disorder, mental health and primary health care treatment into cohesive, and client-centered programs."

discrimination, was filed by Personalized Nursing LIGHT House (PNLC), Joseph Paliwoda, its Founder and President, and the Fair Housing Center alleging disability discrimination. According to the complaint, PNLH provides a comprehensive drug treatment model for

recovery that includes intensive counseling. PNLC's program also includes supportive housing for its clients. PNLH pays for and supervises the residents in the apartments it rents.

From 2004 through 2019, PNLC rented apartments at the Crossings at Canton (Crossings) be occupied by PNLC clients. PNLH's rent payments were never late, and there was no history of complaints about noise or other issues involving PNLH clients residing at the Crossings. Between December 2018 and October 2019, however, Crossing's management served "notices to quit" on PNLH, forcing PNLH to scramble to find new apartments for the 74 clients who had been living there. In early 2019, Defendants informed Paliwoda that PNLH's leases would not be renewed because the units were to be remodeled. At the time, Paliwoda informed Crossings management that he would be happy to relocate his clients to other, open units in the complex and offered to pay an increased rental rate to avoid the displacement. Defendants' on-site manager responded by informing Paliwoda that there was no inventory available for any PNLH clients at the Crossings, which comprises some 700 units. In April 2019, the management company for the Crossings sent Paliwoda an email stating, in part, "I am sorry this is not the resolution that you were seeking, however [I] am sure with your excellent payment history that you will have no issue securing housing for your organization in the greater Canton as the leases expire."

By October 2019, the last of some 70 PNLH clients had been forced out of the Crossings. Throughout the period that PNLH clients were being evicted, PNLH and Paliwoda continued to receive multiple marketing and promotional materials from the Crossings, advertising vacancies and move-in specials offered to the general public. According to the federal court complaint, the statements and actions of Defendants made it clear "that the Crossings no longer wanted to rent to PNLH because the PNLH clients were in addiction recovery programs."

"Despite recent media coverage of our country's opiate epidemic and a significant improvement in the general population's understanding of addiction, recovering substance abusers still face stigmatization and discrimination in some form almost every day," said Paliwoda, who has worked with recovering substance abusers for decades. According to Paliwoda said, "It's extremely hard to convince a property manager to give our clients a chance. It's hard even when we guarantee the rent - even when we pay a premium - and provide supervision."

Paliwoda and his team at PNLC were sidelined from almost all other work for months as he and his team made efforts to relocate its clients and to continue their treatment. The Fair Housing Center, likewise, spent an inordinate amount of time assisting PNLC clients in bringing separate housing discrimination complaints against Defendants.

The case was filed by attorney Robin B. Wagner, Esq., of Pitt McGehee Palmer Bonanni & Rivers PC, in Royal Oak, MI. The case is currently pending in federal court before U.S. District Court Judge Bernard A. Friedman.

Familial Status and Age Discrimination



Attorney Wagner in October 2020 filed another fair housing case on behalf of the Fair Housing Center against a dozen apartment complexes. The Center received a report of discrimination on the basis of familial status and age involving an apartment complex in Macomb County.

The Center's testing and investigation confirmed that all of the properties impose a blanket rule restricting residences to two persons per bedroom, regardless of factors such as the size of the bedroom and the age of the occupants. The majority of the apartment complexes properties publish information on their websites confirming this

restriction of "no more than two occupants per bedroom may occupy the apartment."

Defendants' strict policy limiting occupancy to "two heartbeats" per bedroom regardless of the size of a bedroom or bedrooms, the age of the occupants, or the local building code occupancy standards, unlawfully discourages families with children from even applying for a rental home. A family of three or five seeing a "two heartbeat" policy published on defendants' websites will not even attempt to apply. This chilling effect can greatly limit the housing available to families,

especially in areas where there is already a paucity of affordable housing. This also increases rental costs for families with children by forcing them to rent units with more bedroom units than they need.

The case was resolved shortly after its filing in U.S. District Court.

Fair Housing Laws as Effective Tools to Aid the Homeless

Effective use of fair housing laws can prevent homelessness. One client was homeless since June 2018. She lost her housing voucher after multiple stays in psychiatric facilities. Other agencies told her many times that nothing could be done due to the lapse in time. In late February 2020, adult protective services referred her to our office. We submitted a request for reasonable accommodation on her behalf. On March 11, 2020, she became the proud recipient of a new housing voucher.

OTHER HOUSING RELATED ASSISTANCE

The Fair Housing Center's efforts in other housing related matters often go unnoticed—but not by our Staff, our Board and, most importantly, by those we serve.

A few months ago, my daughter and I found ourselves the victims of a fraud after we rented a Detroit home from a man who presented himself as an owner. It turned out that he did not own the home and falsely received \$2,000 from us. With a representative of a mortgage company demanding my immediate departure from the property, I turned to the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit for help.

The staff of the Fair Housing Center drafted documents, researched the property deed, and went above and beyond to assure we weren't the victims of an illegal eviction. They took the time out of their busy schedules to even come to my home to represent me when the property management company came numerous of times with Detroit police officers. Unfortunately, I was forced to leave the property, but with the Center's help I was able to find a new home for my daughter and me.

I never had anyone help me for free at that with the way they did, and I will forever be grateful and appreciative. Please call me if you would like more information about what the Center did for me.

This year the Center will conduct the intake and provide services in over 200 housing related matters, ranging from habitability and maintenance issues; issues involving lease provisions and security deposits; assistance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) eviction moratorium protections and completion of the renter's or homeowner's declaration; and violations of Michigan's "Anti-Lockout Statute" (MCL § 600.2918).

Our housing related assistance services, like our fair housing services, can aid the homeless. One homeless complainant was approved for a new rental home if she could pay \$904 claimed by her prior landlord and obtain a letter from that landlord showing no amounts owing.

Using landlord-tenant laws and consumer protection statutes, the Center sent a demand letter for \$179 owed by the former landlord to the complainant. The Center demonstrated the unlawful assessment of cleaning and painting fees, imposition of unwarranted late fees and "month to month" fees, and \$250 statutory damages owed to the complainant. In response, the landlord provided a letter showing no balance owing by the complainant. This enabled her to move into her new home, thereby, escaping homelessness.



In another case, a complainant and her landlord entered into a lease with an option to purchase the house. The landlord died just before she exercised her option to purchase. Although she timely exercised the option to

purchase, the landlord's estate refused to honor the agreement and proceeded with plans to sell her home. She contacted our office in November 2018 after being unable to obtain representation from any legal services organization. After lengthy legal proceedings involving the Wayne County Circuit Court, the Oakland County Probate Court and the Oakland Mediation Center, she finally and deservedly became the proud owner of her first home.

In the picture on the right, the complainant is standing in front of her home with her daughter and son. She is holding a framed copy of the recorded deed to her home.



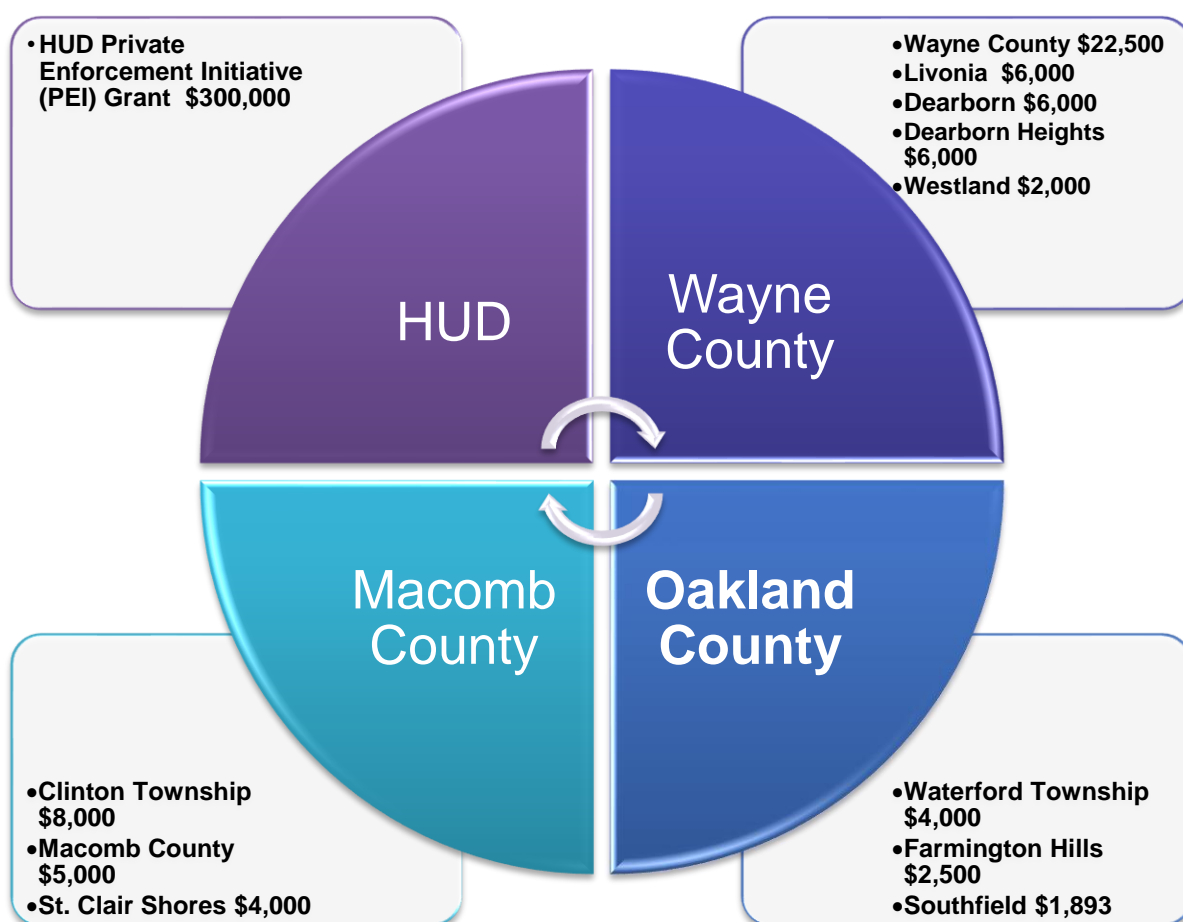
FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial support is critically important as the Fair Housing Center has never charged any fee for the filing, investigation, testing, conciliation and, as necessary, enforcement proceedings.

Governmental Grants

The Center's main grant is its three-year Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) grant with HUD. This is a three-year grant at \$300,000 per year. The Center is in the third year of its current HUD PEI grant.

In June 2020, HUD announced that the Center was a top recipient for a new three-grant, with annual funding increased to \$360,000 per year. This new grant, scheduled to begin in April 2021, will enable the Center to further increase its programmatic activities.



There are 23 CDBG recipients or jurisdictions in the Center's tri-county service area. The Fair Housing Center currently receives sub-CDBG funding from nearly one-half (11 of the 23) of these CDBG recipients. The 11 sub-CDBG grants for PY 2020-21 total \$67,893, reflecting an increase from the PY 2019-20 total of \$65,133. The Center appreciates these government agencies and municipalities not only for their financial support but also for their continued commitment to fair housing in their respective communities.



The Fair Housing Center also received financial support from the Michigan Department of Civil Rights for a fair housing training conference addressing the needs of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities.



Private Grants and Contributions

The Fair Housing Center appreciates the private support and contributions it receives. The following entities and individual provided substantial support for the Center's program activities and mission. For example, the Center used private grant funds to develop a "*Detroit e-Brochure - Landlord-Tenant and Fair Housing*" to aid Detroit residents in knowing their landlord-tenant and fair housing rights.

Silver (\$5,000)



Platinum (\$2,000)



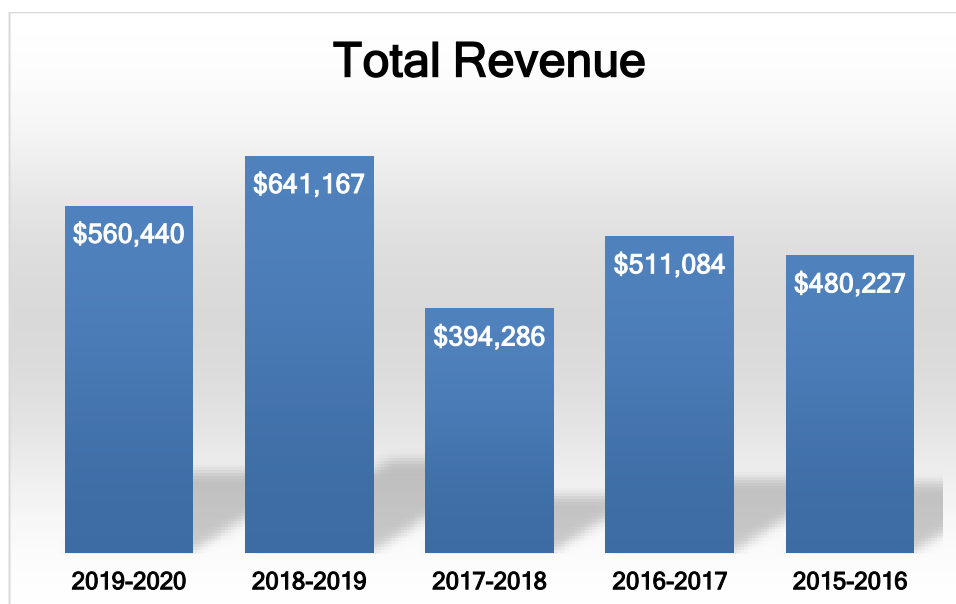
Bronze (\$1,000)

Karlynne Tucker Scaggs

Supporting (\$500)



TOTAL REVENUE



Year	Total Revenue	HUD Grant	Other Grants & Contracts	Training, Contributions & Other Sources
2019-2020	\$560,440	\$360,000	\$62,983	\$137,457
2018-2019	\$641,167	\$300,000	\$61,241	\$279,926
2017-2018	\$394,286	\$300,000	\$58,050	\$36,236
2016-2017	\$511,084	\$314,975	\$65,300	\$130,809
2015-2016	\$480,227	\$300,000	\$47,400	\$132,827

EXPENSES

Program Expenses 2019-2020	
Salary, Wages and Benefits	\$218,930
Payroll Taxes	\$44,807
Rent	\$19,244
Professional Fees and Expenses	\$18,556
Advertising	\$14,738
Office Supplies	\$8,395
Testing Stipends and Expenses	\$8,206
Insurance	\$6,593
Travel, Conferences and Meetings	\$6,130
Equipment Rental	\$4,351
Books, Subscriptions and Reference Materials	\$2,257
Postage	\$423
Bank Service fees	\$215
License & Permits	\$183
Total:	\$353,027

OUR TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Roshelle Woods
Intake Specialist

Charles Shanaman
*Coordinator of Administration and
Investigations*

FINANCIAL

Deborah Eggleston, CPA
Accountant

Blair Pearce, CB
Bookkeeper

The Fair Housing Center, again, acknowledges the services of its volunteer team of over 200 fair housing testers. Our testers continue to be the unsung heroes in the fight for fair housing and civil rights.