



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Dear Colleagues:

As the Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, we recognize that a growing body of research supports the benefits of socioeconomic and racial diversity in schools and communities, and that such diversity can help establish access points for opportunity and mobility. We also recognize that children raised in concentrated poverty or in communities segregated by socioeconomic status or race or ethnicity have significantly lower social and economic mobility than those growing up in integrated communities.

Rising economic segregation means that an increasing number of low-income households are located in distressed neighborhoods where they face challenges such as failing schools, high rates of crime, and inadequate access to services and jobs, making it harder for individuals and families to escape poverty. In addition, sprawling urban development patterns correlate with decreased economic opportunity and social mobility.

Today, our agencies are calling on local education, transportation, and housing leaders to work together on issues at the intersection of our respective missions in helping to guarantee full access of opportunity across the country. Our goals are to identify impediments to accessing opportunity; to coordinate efforts to address these issues and to provide broad-reaching benefits; and to ensure that every child and family is provided with transportation, housing, and education tools that promote economic mobility. The new process in which communities are engaging under the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule (AFFH rule) from HUD provides an opportunity for cross-agency collaboration and strong community involvement. We urge you to take full advantage of the community participation process of the AFFH rule, so that regional planning promotes economic mobility and equal access to the many benefits provided by affordable housing, great schools, and reliable transportation.

What is the new AFFH rule?

For more than 40 years, recipients of funding from HUD have been obligated by the Fair Housing Act (the Act) to reduce barriers to fair housing. The Act directs HUD and its program participants to affirmatively further the Act's goals of promoting fair housing and equal opportunity. HUD published its final rule on affirmatively furthering fair housing on July 16, 2015, to implement a process to help communities that receive HUD funding meet this long-standing obligation.

How can education and transportation organizations and stakeholders get involved?

The AFFH rule clarifies and simplifies existing fair housing obligations for HUD grantees to analyze their fair housing landscape and set locally determined fair housing priorities and goals through an Assessment of Fair Housing. The AFFH rule sets out a fair housing planning framework for HUD program participants. It represents a new tool that provides housing, transportation, and education stakeholders the chance to work together to develop thoughtful goals and strategies to promote fair housing choice and equal opportunity through, among other things, improved economic, education, and health outcomes for disadvantaged communities.

HUD strongly encourages regional coordination in preparing an Assessment of Fair Housing under the AFFH rule. The reason is simple: many of the issues at stake are not confined to any one local jurisdiction's borders, nor are the tools to address those issues always within the power of a single agency acting alone. Education and transportation stakeholders' engagement and input in the fair housing assessment are critical to ensuring each region realizes the vision for equal access to opportunity. This includes fair housing choice and educational opportunity throughout communities — both of which require strategic transportation investments. The success of the Nation's metropolitan regions and rural areas in ensuring equal access to opportunity for all will help set the stage not only for improved economic, educational, and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities, but also for sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship for all our citizens. Below are some examples of how you can get involved.

State and local educational agencies are encouraged to:

- Develop strategies for drawing school attendance boundaries, selecting sites for new schools, and the placement of boundary-free open enrollment or lottery schools (such as charter schools or magnet schools and programs) with a specific aim of providing equal access to high-quality schools and increasing the diversity of the community served by these schools.
- Consult with transportation and housing authorities and housing development agencies when engaging in school site planning, in order to ensure safe passage to school for students and that high-performing schools serve diverse populations, including high-need students.
- Work with transportation and housing agencies to share important information on school achievement, graduation rates, and demographic composition to create housing and school choice opportunities that best address the unique needs of students, families, and communities and expand access to an excellent education.

Transportation agencies are encouraged to:

- Work with local schools, housing authorities, and housing development agencies to create good land use and planning strategies that foster ease of access to critical housing, school, and transportation resources for students, teachers, parents, and the broader community.

- Work with local schools and housing authorities to identify opportunities to align public transportation routes, sidewalk construction, and related bus stops with schools and housing facilities. Make sure that the transportation, sidewalks, and bus stops are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety in and around local schools by including Safe Routes to School initiatives, Complete Streets design strategies, and other safety approaches.
- Include local school districts, housing authorities, Head Start programs, community colleges, and other related entities in developing coordinated mass transit plans.

HUD's Program Participants (States, Insular Areas, local governments, and public housing authorities) are encouraged to:

- Reach out to local education and transportation stakeholders during the community participation process, when developing their Assessment of Fair Housing, to share and obtain relevant data, policy decisions, and resources to inform the Assessment of Fair Housing and other future planning documents.
- Develop resource sharing opportunities and mechanisms, such as links to reports and data tools to support the development of Assessment of Fair Housing and other planning documents.

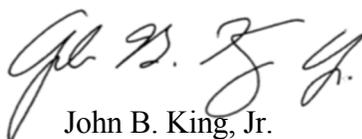
Where do we go from here?

We encourage your engagement and input into these critical conversations in your communities. Working together, local education, transportation, and housing and community development agencies, and communities as a whole, can realize the vision for well-connected public transportation networks and safer streets; optimal access to educational opportunity; and decent, safe, and affordable housing. Additional information on the AFFH rule can be found at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/AFFH-FAQs.pdf>.

Sincerely,



Julián Castro
Secretary of Housing
and Urban Development



John B. King, Jr.
Secretary of Education



Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Transportation