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NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

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FAIR HOUSING CENTER URGES LRA BOARD TO RECOGNIZE AND ACT ON CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN NEW ORLEANS

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) was recently made aware that the LRA Board will consider a proposal at their next meeting on House Speaker Jim Tucker's resolutions to move up to \$1 billion dollars of Community Development Block Grant funds away from programs that create much-needed affordable housing. GNOFHAC strongly urges the LRA Board to remain focused on addressing the urgent demand for affordable housing in New Orleans, and to ensure that the dedicated funds remain committed to creating housing. Repurposing the funds would significantly risk violating the state's statutory duty to *affirmatively further fair housing*.

It is critical that decisions about the development of affordable housing be based on sound data. On November 12, 2009, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC) released a report entitled "Housing Production Needs: Three Scenarios for New Orleans," which examines how much more and what types of housing New Orleans needs. In all three population scenarios considered, the GNOCDC report finds that given current trends, the projected demand for affordable units drastically outpaces projected supply. In effect, New Orleans continues to face an affordable housing crisis that will only continue to get worse over time unless addressed.

In May, the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) released a report that examined the supply of subsidized rental housing in the New Orleans area, absent any analysis of the significant demand for affordable housing. The BGR report and BGR testimony at public hearings has been used by some to justify attempts to halt funding for the continued development of much-needed affordable housing. After the release of the GNOCDC report, BGR President Janet Howard clarified in an interview that it would be "inaccurate" for anyone to use the BGR report to demonstrate that there is too much affordable housing in the region since the report did not examine demand.¹

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Given the clearly demonstrated, persistent need for affordable housing in New Orleans, the Fair Housing Action Center calls on Speaker Tucker and all members of the LRA Board to:

- 1) Accurately analyze and act on the data available regarding both the supply of affordable housing in New Orleans and the persistent demand for it, including the "Housing Production Needs" report and Janet Howard's recent comments clarifying the applicability of the BGR report.
- 2) Retain all CDBG funding currently dedicated for housing where it is, and remove Speaker Tucker's resolution from the LRA Board meeting agenda. Furthermore, consider dedicating additional resources to alleviate the affordable housing crisis that New Orleanians face.

Kate Scott, Interim Co-Director of GNOFHAC, comments "Housing remains a critical issue in the recovery of New Orleans. In determining the future of the city, policymakers should make decisions based on high quality data that speaks to the issues at hand. A full picture of affordable housing supply and demand now indicates a continued need for more affordable housing in New Orleans, and we demand that the LRA Board act accordingly."

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The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private non-profit organization. The Center was established by a group of concerned New Orleanians in 1995 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance and a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. GNOFHAC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the metro New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. The activities described in this release were privately funded.