2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Fair Housing Center
for Rights & Research

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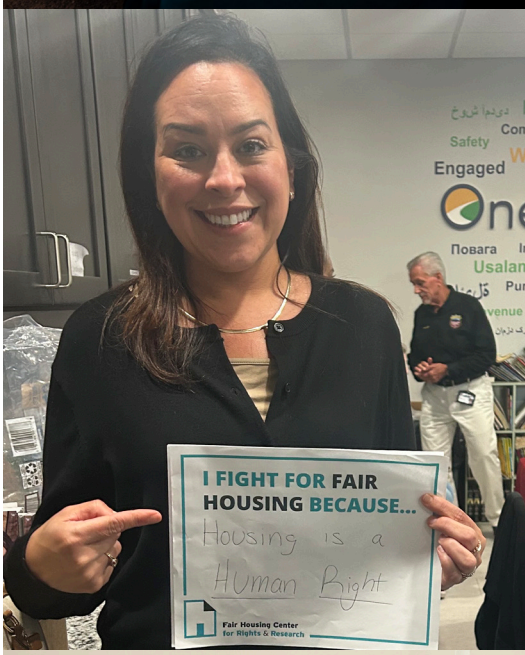
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MISSION + HISTORY

The mission of the Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research is to protect and expand fair housing rights, eliminate housing discrimination, and promote integrated communities.

Background

The **Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research** (formerly known as the Housing Research & Advocacy Center) is a not for profit fair housing agency that promotes equal housing opportunities and positive race relations in Northeast Ohio. The Fair Housing Center was established in 1983 as the Metropolitan Strategy Group, and became the Housing Research & Advocacy Center in 2003. The Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research made its most recent name change in 2018 to better encompass the organization's mission and scope of services. The Fair Housing Center was founded as a "brown bag" luncheon group of local fair housing/civil rights advocates who shared a goal of expanding housing opportunities for Greater Clevelanders regardless of their race, religion, gender, ethnicities, national origins, familial status, or disability. The Fair Housing Center has significantly grown since its inception in 1983. While the Fair Housing Center continues to advocate for programs that promote fair housing, the scope of the agency has changed from a grass-roots coalition of community groups to a focused fair housing agency. The Fair Housing Center's general mission remains the same: To ensure, through research, educational programs, public policy and enforcement activities, that all residents are guaranteed equal access to housing.

Founding Date

The Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research was established as the Metropolitan Strategy Group in 1983, was incorporated under not-for-profit laws in the State of Ohio in 1992, and granted federal exemption status in 1994.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2025, changes at the federal level caused fair housing organizations throughout the country to face challenges and a great deal of uncertainty. The federal government attempted to terminate fair housing grants and eliminate funding for key fair housing programs. In response, advocates organized a statewide press conference, filed lawsuits, and executed advocacy campaigns to fight for the rights of our clients and the resources we need to continue this work.

With so much uncertainty, community support has been more important than ever. On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, we welcomed friends, partners, and community members to our office for an Open House at The Fair Housing Center. Our staff and board enjoyed connecting with community members, sharing more about the work that we do, and inviting attendees to support fair and equitable housing in Northeast Ohio. We were blown away by the outpouring of support from our friends, partners, and community, and we sincerely enjoyed connecting with the people who make this work possible.

Our Policy and Research team published the 2025 State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio report in the spring of 2025. This report is the Fair Housing Center's 19th annual comprehensive examination of fair housing trends for Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties. Nearly 60 years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, housing discrimination remains widespread and on the rise in Northeast Ohio. Segregation continues to shape housing and socio-economic outcomes in the region, and vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted by housing instability and rapidly growing



housing cost burdens. Additionally, our team published two reports examining local perspectives on criminal convictions in housing. One report details the perspectives of housing consumers on securing housing with a criminal conviction record in Cuyahoga County and the other examines Cuyahoga County housing provider perspectives on renting to people with criminal convictions. Informed by the survey responses of both housing providers and people with criminal convictions, the reports reveal that people with criminal convictions experience systemic housing barriers in Cuyahoga County, including discriminatory treatment, financial impediments, and exclusionary screening practices.

In its 20th year of existence, the Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council (VAPAC), led by our Senior Policy Advisor, Frank Ford, continued working to address issues surrounding vacant and abandoned properties, housing insecurity, and the negative outcomes that can impact communities and their housing markets. Heather Lazar joined our Policy and Research team in 2025 as the first Program Manager of VAPAC.

In 2025, the Housing and Community Development Forum series officially launched, offering free opportunities for community members, industry experts, and housing professionals to learn about the most pressing issues impacting housing in Northeast Ohio. Presented by the Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research, Home Repair Resource Center, and Greater Cleveland Reinvestment Coalition, this organizational collaboration convenes a team comprised of individuals and organizations working to raise awareness about housing issues at the local, county, and state level. To stay up to date, learn about upcoming forums, and watch previous recordings, visit https://hrrc-ch.org/?page_id=29426.

In its fourth year, our mobility team continued to enroll clients and recruit landlords to participate in the Cuyahoga Community Choice Demonstration. The team enrolled 119 families in the program and facilitated 37 moves to opportunity areas in Cuyahoga County. This program continues to provide local families with the resources and support they need to thrive in their new homes.

Our Advocacy and Enforcement team provided 1,009 community referrals to connect families with trusted community partners, conducted intakes for 401 new complaints of housing discrimination, and collaborated with residents to resolve 56 complaints through direct engagement with local housing providers. After obtaining fair housing guidance from The Fair Housing Center, 15 additional complainants were able to resolve their concerns independently. In addition to direct intervention, advocates provided education and referrals to administrative enforcement agencies for investigation of 114 complaints of housing discrimination throughout the year. The Fair Housing Center filed 13 new agency complaints with administrative enforcement agencies, resolved one agency complaint in-house, and continued work on dozens of ongoing agency cases. Additionally, The Fair Housing Center settled 11 complaints filed with administrative agencies and another case pending in federal court.

In 2025, our Education and Outreach team facilitated 46 fair housing trainings, reaching a total of 1,511 people. That's over 126 hours spent delivering fair housing education, which translates into a grand total of 2,827 training hours received by attendees. Additionally, our team participated in 53 outreach events throughout the year, connecting with community members and sharing important fair housing resources.

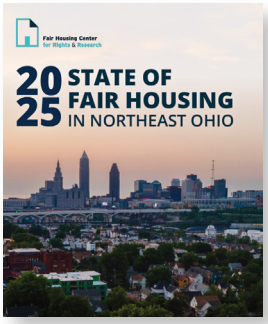
At the Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research, protecting the fair housing rights of Northeast Ohioans is our top priority and we will never stop working to achieve fair housing. With your support, we can continue to assist our clients who have experienced housing discrimination and advocate for fair and equitable housing opportunities for all people.





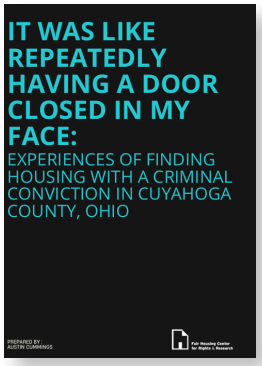
POLICY + RESEARCH

2025 Research Publications:



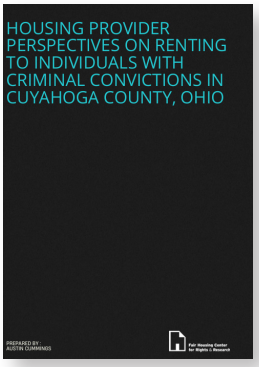
2025 State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio Report

This report is the Fair Housing Center's nineteenth annual comprehensive examination of fair housing trends for Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties. Fifty-seven years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act housing discrimination remains widespread and on the rise in Northeast Ohio; segregation continues to shape housing and socio-economic outcomes in the region; and vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted by housing instability and rapidly growing
housing cost burdens.



It was Like Repeatedly Having a Door Closed in my Face: Finding Housing with Criminal Convictions in Cuyahoga County

This report focuses on the housing consumer's perspective of securing housing with a criminal conviction record. It is being released in conjunction with a companion report which focuses on housing provider perspectives on renting to people with criminal conviction records and the tenant screening practices they utilize. Combined, they offer insight into the barriers people impacted by criminal conviction records experience accessing housing and into what housing providers feel may incentivize more of their peers to rent to individuals with criminal conviction records.



Housing Provider Perspectives on Renting to Individuals with Criminal Convictions in Cuyahoga County

This report focuses on housing provider perspectives on renting to people with criminal conviction records and the tenant screening practices they utilize. It is being released in conjunction with a companion report which focuses on the housing consumer's perspective of securing housing with a criminal conviction record. Combined, they offer insight into the barriers people impacted by criminal conviction records experience accessing housing and into what housing providers feel may incentivize more of their peers to rent to individuals with criminal conviction records.

In the News:

Fair Housing Center Reports Detail Housing Struggles Facing Those With Criminal Convictions in Cuyahoga County - Cleveland Scene

POLICY + RESEARCH

VAPAC
Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council

Frank Ford and Heather Lazar are primarily responsible for staffing and leading the Cuyahoga County Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council (VAPAC). Secondary responsibilities include work on related housing policy issues and housing policy research.

Overview of VAPAC

VAPAC was founded in 2005 with a mission of collaboratively bringing together stakeholders to address vacant and abandoned property issues created by the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Over time, in recognition of the dynamic and complex nature of these issues, VAPAC's mission has evolved to more broadly encompass housing and housing finance practices that could lead to vacancy, abandonment, and housing insecurity for owners and renters, as well as the negative outcomes that can impact communities and their housing markets. From its inception VAPAC has recognized that these issues have had, and continue to have, a disproportionate impact on people of color communities. Racial justice, equality and racial equity have always been implicit in the work of VAPAC and they continue to be core principles that guide VAPAC's work.

VAPAC Participating Organizations

Personnel affiliated with the following organizations participate in VAPAC meetings and working groups.

- Center for Economic Development, CSU
- CHN Housing Partners
- City of Cleveland - Building and Housing Department
- City of Cleveland - City Council
- City of Cleveland - Community Development Department
- City of Cleveland – Land Bank
- City of Cleveland – Law Department
- City of Cleveland – Mayor's Office
- City of Cleveland - Municipal Housing Court
- Cleveland CDC Housing Committee
- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
- Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in Ohio (COHHIO)
- Community Housing Solutions
- Cuyahoga Board of Revision
- Cuyahoga Common Pleas Court
- Cuyahoga Consumer Affairs
- Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office
- Cuyahoga County Treasurer
- Cuyahoga Department of Economic Development
- Cuyahoga Department of Housing & Community Development
- Cuyahoga Fiscal Office
- Cuyahoga Land Bank
- Cuyahoga Sheriff's Office
- Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research
- Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland
- First Suburbs Consortium
- Greater Ohio Policy Center
- Home Repair Resource Center
- Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
- National Fair Housing Alliance
- Northeast Ohio Legal Aid
- Ohio Attorney General – Cleveland Office
- Ohio CDC Association
- Ohio Land Bank Association
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy

POLICY + RESEARCH

VAPAC Working Groups Active in 2025:

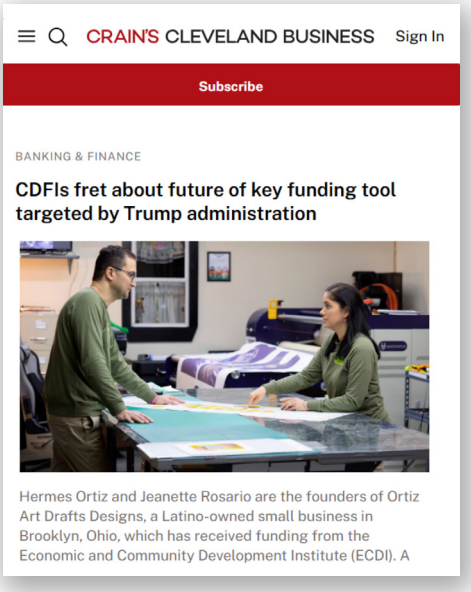
- Property Tax Delinquency Working Group (Co-chairs Sally Martin O'Toole and Ben Faller)
- Housing Affordability & Stability Working Group (Co-chairs Phil Star and Austin Cummings)
- Investor Working Group (Co-chairs Zach Germaniuk and Tim Kobie)
- Squatters Working Group (Co-chairs Lindsey Zsebedics and Ron O'Leary)

Reports Produced, Policy Positions and/or Testimony Submitted:

- In February 2025 VAPAC submitted concerns to Mayor Bibb regarding proposed staffing cuts to the Building & Housing Department budget.
- In the Spring of 2025 VAPAC joined with other housing and community development organizations around the state to submit a letter to Governor DeWine and members of the General Assembly to express concerns about the 2025 Ohio budget bill (HB96) which, among other things, would undermine funding for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. On June 26, 2025 COHHIO announced that this state-wide effort had been successful.
- In May of 2025 VAPAC joined with other organizations in a statewide coalition to support Ohio Senate Bills 42 and 22, which would provide property tax relief to seniors and other vulnerable home-owners experiencing sharp tax hikes.
- The VAPAC Housing Affordability & Stability Working Group prepared an analysis of proposed city council legislation creating a funding system for community development corporations. This resulted in a letter to Mayor Bibb and City Council.
- The VAPAC Housing Affordability & Stability Working Group prepared a review and response to the 2025 Cuyahoga County Housing Study that VAPAC submitted to the Cuyahoga County Executive, 11-24-25.
- The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy published a report "Who Owns America" which cited VAPAC's March 2022 Investor White Paper, November 2025.
- Frank Ford prepared an annual review of delinquent property tax delinquency for the VAPAC Tax Working Group 12-2-25.

VAPAC in the News:

- Crain's Cleveland Business quoted Frank Ford in an article about potential cuts to funding for Community Development Financial Institutions. 3-28-25.



POLICY + RESEARCH

Celebrating 20 Years of VAPAC

On Thursday, December 11th, 2025, the Cuyahoga County Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council (VAPAC) celebrated their 20-year anniversary with over 70 friends and advocates. The event was held at the Polish American Cultural Center in the Slavic Village neighborhood – the "epicenter" for Cleveland's foreclosure crisis. Proclamations were presented by Mayor Justin Bibb; Anthony Scott, Director of Cuyahoga County's Department of Housing & Community Development Department, on behalf of County Executive Chris Ronayne; and Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin. A total of 18 speakers participated in a tribute to VAPAC's history, partnerships, and accomplishments. Among these speakers were those who formed and attended the very first meeting of VAPAC, including Alan Mallach and Joe Schilling, whose 2004 research paper, *Cleveland at the Crossroads*, ultimately led to the formation of VAPAC.

We are fortunate to have an organization like VAPAC working to address issues surrounding vacant and abandoned properties in Cuyahoga County, and our communities are better for the work VAPAC has done over the past two decades. We look forward to all the ways that VAPAC and its members will continue to impact our communities in the next 20 years. To learn more about VAPAC's most significant work throughout the years, please visit https://thehousingcenter.org/vapac.











CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY CHOICE DEMONSTRATION

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

37

moves to opportunity areas in Cuyahoga County

119

new families enrolled in the program

1 of 6

sites in the U.S. participating in the Community Choice Demonstration

COMMUNITY CHOICE DEMONSTRATION

The **Cuyahoga Community Choice Demonstration** is a housing voucher mobility program offered in partnership with the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. The Community Choice Demonstration assists families with children enrolled in the Housing Choice Voucher Program in accessing neighborhoods with strong community resources by offering program participants pre- and post-move counseling, extra financial assistance including security deposit payment, and assistance with the housing search. Additionally, the program attracts housing providers to the program through recruitment, expediting processing time, rapid inspections, lease-up bonuses, and property protection.

Learn more: www.cuyahogamobility.org

ADVOCACY + ENFORCEMENT

The Fair Housing Center's Advocacy team fielded thousands of calls for assistance in 2025 and **provided 1,009 community referrals** to connect families with additional community resources. Our referrals helped residents remedy health and safety violations in their homes through code enforcement, access legal representation, learn how to escrow their rent, and access emergency rental assistance.

The Advocacy team **conducted intakes for 401 new fair housing issues** in 2025. 96.5% involved rental transactions. While disability remains the leading basis of complaints received, complaints of discrimination based upon race, sex, criminal background, and source of income were also significant.

The Advocacy team **assisted in resolving 56 of the 2025 fair housing intakes** through direct engagement with local housing providers. An additional **15 complainants were able to resolve their concerns independently** after obtaining fair housing information from The Fair Housing Center. In addition to direct assistance, advocates **provided education and referrals to administrative enforcement agencies for investigation of 114 client complaint**s of housing discrimination received in 2025.

The Fair Housing Center **filed 13 new agency complaints** with administrative enforcement agencies and **one complaint in state court** in 2025 to address fair housing concerns identified through testing, intake, or other investigation, **resolved one agency complaint in-house**, and **continued work on dozens of pending agency complaints.** The Fair Housing Center also **settled 11 agency complaints** filed with administrative agencies and **another case pending in federal court.**

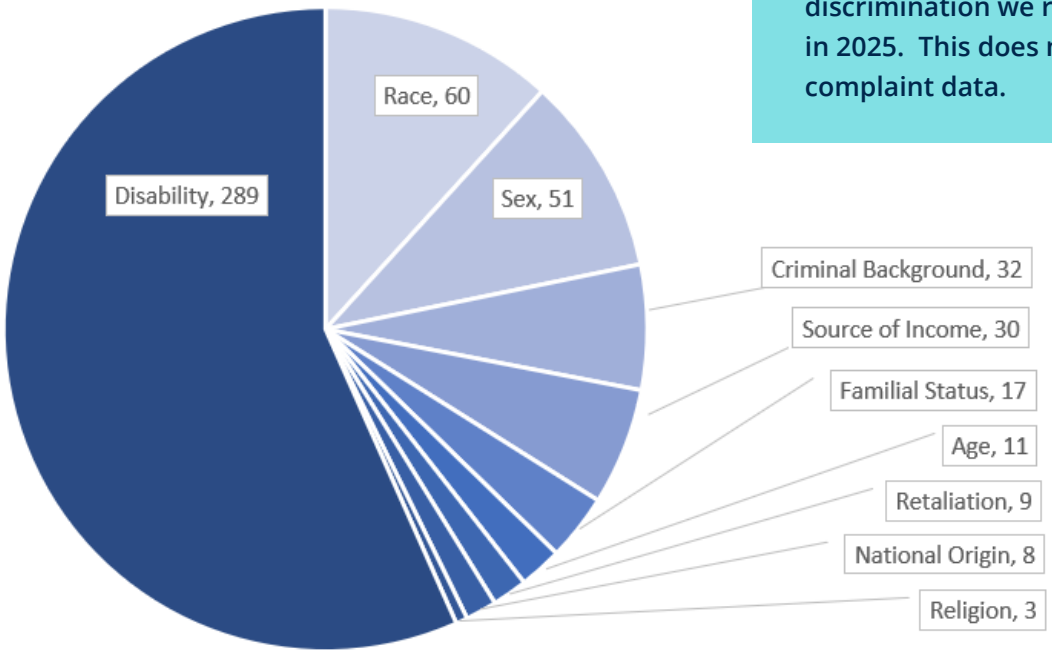
Note: The total number of alleged bases of discrimination (516) is greater than the total number of new client complaints reported to our office (401) because some complainants allege discrimination on more than one basis.



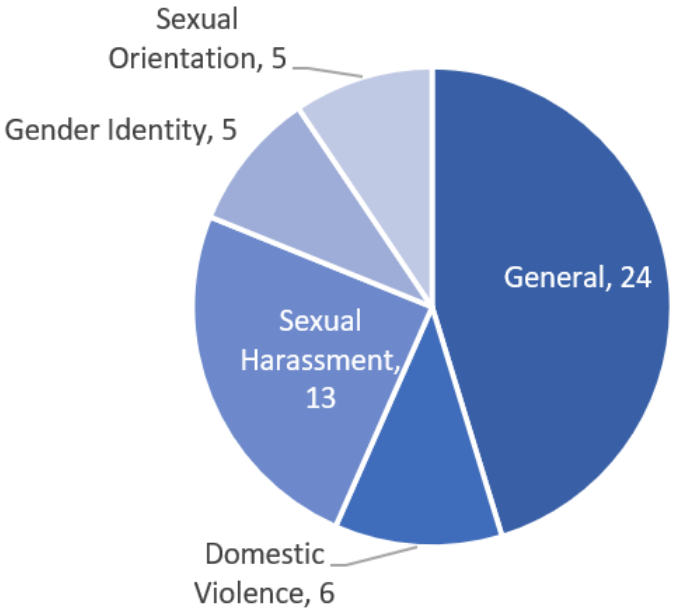
ADVOCACY + ENFORCEMENT

Bases of Discrimination Reported in 2025

This is the breakdown of all the reports of discrimination we received from the public in 2025. This does not include agency complaint data.



Bases of Reported Sex Discrimination, 2025



The sex breakdown totals up to more than 51 (the total number of sex complaints received) because some complainants identify more than one subcategory of sex discrimination.

EDUCATION + OUTREACH

2025 HIGHLIGHTS:

46 fair housing trainings delivered

53 community outreach events participated in

1,511 people trained on fair housing law

126.5 hours spent delivering fair housing education

2,827 total training hours provided to attendees

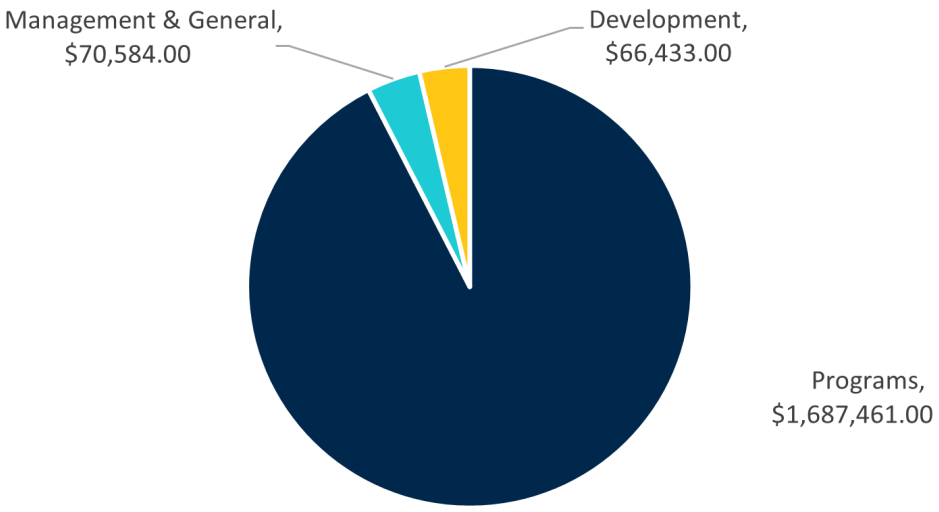






FINANCIAL STATEMENT

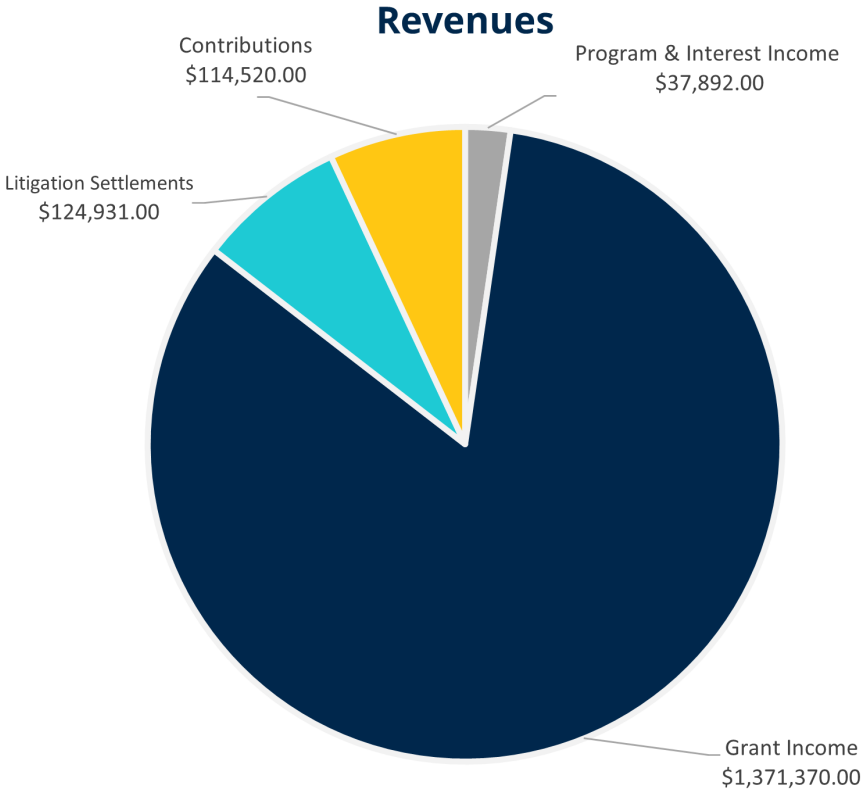
Expenses



2025 EXPENSES

- Programs: $1,687,461
- Management & General: $70,584
- Development: $66,433
- **TOTAL EXPENSES: $1,824,478**

Revenues



2025 REVENUES

- Program & Interest Income $37,892
- Grant Income: $1,371,370
- Litigation Settlements: $124,931
- Contribution Income: $114,520
- **TOTAL REVENUES: $1,648,713**

OUR TEAM



Carrie Pleasants,
Executive Director



Lonnie Pratt,
Leasing Coordinator



Megan Crow,
Director of Client Advocacy



Kris Keniray,
Associate Director



David Quigley,
Mobility Counselor



Austin Cummings,
Senior Research Associate



Tanesha Seaborn,
Director of Education & Outreach



Joanna Riley-Jackman,
Mobility Counselor



Frank Ford,
Senior Policy Advisor



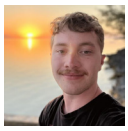
Emily Martin,
Communications & Outreach Specialist



Alex Muskal-Hills,
Leasing Coordinator



Heather Lazar,
Program Manager, VAPAC



Dawson Fishman,
Housing Justice Outreach Intern



Abigail Beard,
Office Administrator



Andrew Shenal,
Research Intern



Faith Rutledge,
Testing Specialist



Chantina Bush,
Client Advocate



Angela Oetama-Paul,
Testing Specialist



Mary Knapp,
Client Advocate



Michael Lepley,
Mobility Program Director



Alek Nielsen,
Client Advocate

NEW IN 2026



Tisha Barnes,
Program Associate



Kalisha Jackson,
Client Advocate



Scout Rainey,
Outreach Intern

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Mia Brown**, Broker/Owner, Mia Brown Realty
- **Hélène Caniac**, Leadership Mentor & Sacred Strategist
- **Diane Citrino**, Retired Attorney
- **Kyle Fee**, Senior Policy Analyst, Community Development at the Federal Reserve Bank
- **Megan Hatch**, Professor, Maxine Goodman Levin School of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University
- **Manny Hall**, Brand Strategist, Manny Hall & Associates
- **Dr. Franceska Jones**, MNO, CEO of Jones Consulting Firm, Host of *Impact Play w/Dr J Podcast*
- **Robert "Bob" Kissling**, *(Secretary)*, Vice President of Human Resources, Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- **CARLETON MOORE!**, *(President)*, Senior Vice President for Advance Planning, CWM! Architects
- **Priscilla Pointer-Hicks** *(Vice President)*, Retired Public Housing Executive
- **Tanmay Shah**, Attorney, Cleveland City Council Member
- **Nolan Stevens**, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
- **Cory Thomas**, *(Treasurer)* Lead Budget Analyst/ Program Analyst, NASA Glenn Research Center









SUPPORT OUR WORK

At The Fair Housing Center, we don't just talk about fair housing – we make it happen. Day in and day out, our advocates work to help Northeast Ohioans resolve to their housing issues, so that they can access fair and equitable housing. Our education and outreach team works year-round to educate housing providers, tenants, and community members throughout the region on their fair housing rights and responsibilities. And our agency continues to push for equitable policy change, as we work to make fair housing a reality for every person living in Northeast Ohio.

At a time when reports of housing discrimination are at an all-time high, ensuring the right to fair housing is more important than ever. With your support, we can continue working to protect and expand fair housing rights, eliminate housing discrimination, and promote integrated communities. With several convenient giving options, you can support fair housing in a way that works for you. Thank you for joining us in the fight for fair housing!

GIVE ONLINE

Visit our donation page to make an online donation and support your neighbors in need. Whether you make a one-time gift or commit to a monthly contribution, your support makes a real difference in the lives of your neighbors.



