

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Lawsuit against the City: Chicago Preserving and Upholding Racial Segregation

Ten affordable housing and neighborhood alliance organizations filed a complaint against the City of Chicago today for its “aldermanic prerogative” policy which has allowed discriminatory housing and zoning practices to flourish. The ten organizations: Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, Chicago Housing Initiative, Jane Adams Senior Caucus, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Neighbors for Affordable Housing, Pilsen Alliance, Southside Together Organizing for Power, Lugenia Burns Hope Center, ONE Northside, and People for Community Recovery, are represented by Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

The Shriver Center and The Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance [released a report](#) this summer, the first of its kind to explicitly identify the current mechanics and quantify the impacts of aldermanic prerogative within a civil rights legal framework. This report, *A City Fragmented: How Race, Power, and Aldermanic Prerogative Shape Chicago’s Neighborhoods*, was built upon extensive quantitative and qualitative research including decades of research by longtime housing advocate Albert C. Hanna. “We have approached a day when unfettered political power wielded by unaccountable leadership, or ‘the Chicago Way’, is unacceptable,” says Hanna.

Pursuant to the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, this complaint challenges the City of Chicago’s longstanding policy and practice of honoring “aldermanic prerogative” for all affordable housing finance, land use, and zoning decisions, in a manner that permits local aldermen and their constituents to veto the placement of affordable housing. The City’s unfettered commitment to aldermanic prerogative has resulted in decades of intentional segregation in Chicago through the blocking of affordable housing developments in white neighborhoods. The impact of that loss is disproportionately felt by black and Latinx households, families with children, and persons with disabilities in need of affordable housing. “Chicago’s deeply rooted political structure ultimately concentrates decision-making power among those with political capital;” said Patricia Fron, Executive Director of the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, “while low-income Chicagoans have little say in where and how they live in the city.”

The complainants in this case seek to end the harmful consequences of aldermanic prerogative, demand greater accountability by the city to create and preserve affordable housing across all of Chicago's neighborhoods, and advance equitable conditions across all Chicago neighborhoods, regardless of their racial composition. Javier Ruiz, a leader of the Pilsen Alliance, one of the ten organizational plaintiffs says, "In filing this Complaint, we ask the candidates running for Mayor of Chicago, the Chairman of the City Council Housing Committee, and the Chairman of the City Council Zoning Committee to make an unyielding commitment today to use their leadership positions to advance equity and fight for a truly inclusive city for all people."

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