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## A Statement on Racial Injustice by the Board and Staff of the Massachusetts Fair Housing Center

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As civil rights advocates, whose mission is to end systemic housing discrimination and segregation, we are profoundly troubled and changed by the tragic events of the last few months. The COVID crisis and recent police killings are stark reminders of the pervasive role of institutional racism in our nation. COVID-19 is creating an urgent public health crisis, killing people of color at disproportionately high rates compared to their White counterparts, while police officers and vigilantes are killing innocent Black men and women when they are walking, jogging, or sleeping in their own homes. These shocking acts demonstrate our country's collective failure to come to terms with the historical injustices of slavery, *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation, and the ongoing oppression and segregation of Black and Brown people.

In Western Massachusetts, deeply entrenched racial segregation in housing helps to maintain concentrated areas of poverty, hyper-segregated public schools, differences in policing, and profound inequities in health outcomes.[1] The historical record shows that government officials and private parties engaged in *intentional* policies of racial exclusion in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create the highly segregated regions that exist throughout Massachusetts today. This segregation is a form of racial violence perpetuated by governmental inaction, unchecked housing discrimination (including racial steering), exclusionary zoning, and myriad other policies and practices that harm Black and Brown people every day.

We are inspired by the protesters who courageously insist that we can no longer afford to tolerate institutionalized racism and

violence. We hear their calls to all fair-minded people to take action to achieve our country's ideals of liberty, equality, and justice. We stand with them and accept the challenge to use our organizational platform to do more to create a truly inclusive society, without racial prejudice or violence. And we pledge to never forget George Floyd, Arnaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and the many other innocent victims of racial violence.

[1] The Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is the most highly segregated large MSA in the nation for Hispanic-White segregation and in the top 20 percent for African-American-White segregation. 2013 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, Department of Housing and Community Development, 3, n. 4.

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57 Suffolk St, Holyoke MA 01060 | [info@massfairhousing.org](mailto:info@massfairhousing.org) | (413) 539-9796

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