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## April is Fair Housing Month: Rhetoric Becomes Reality, Affecting Housing Choice

*Latinos Overwhelmingly Target of National Origin Housing Discrimination in Illinois, per HUD data*

**CHICAGO—April 16, 2012**—While 44 years have passed since April 1968’s milestone federal Fair Housing Act, an estimated four million violations of the law continue to occur each year. And although only a fraction of those violations actually get reported—less than 30,000 according to a 2010 estimate by the National Fair Housing Alliance—data indicate that a combined 56 percent of the bases for complaints filed over the last decade in Illinois involved discrimination based on race and national origin, with much of it targeted towards Latinos.

Analysis of HUD data, provided at the request of the Latino Policy Forum, shows that between 2000 and 2011, race continues to pose restrictions on housing choice for many families, with race-related complaints comprising the basis of nearly half (43 percent) of Illinois’ discrimination-related complaints. And for discrimination complaints based on national origin, 61 percent involved discrimination towards Latinos. Data was drawn from HUD and its Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP), which includes state and local government organizations charged with investigating and processing fair housing complaints.

“Housing discrimination is an unacceptable reality for too many groups. But in the case of both immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos, escalating anti-immigrant rhetoric is steadily becoming reality—and housing discrimination is just one manifestation of that reality.” said Juliana Gonzalez-Crussi, housing policy analyst for the Latino Policy Forum. “We hear heart-breaking stories about discrimination based on perceived immigration status, family size, even speaking with an accent, every day. It is upsetting that these things are happening, but it is even more distressing that families don’t know their rights or recourse under the law—particularly when such actions are illegal and unmerited.”

The federal Fair Housing Act declared it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability or familial status in rental housing, real estate sales, lending, insurance, and any financial or other services related to housing. In addition to race and national origin, the protected classes of disability, familial status and gender were the basis of many violations of fair housing law in Illinois, tallying 33, 16 and 10 percent of the bases of complaints, respectively. As protected classes are mutually exclusive, the combined percentages total more than 100 percent.

In recognition of April as Fair Housing Month, the Latino Policy Forum is partnering with local, housing-focused organizations to raise awareness of rights under fair housing law:

- If landlords inquire about a prospective tenant’s immigration status, the same must be asked of all applicants.
- It is illegal to require additional documentation or fees for immigrants or perceived immigrants.
- If a prospective tenant brings along a translator, the landlord or agent must work with that translator.

Throughout April, Latino-serving housing organizations will conduct fair housing workshops at Chicago’s Mexican Consulate. Participating organizations include: Access Living, Chicago Commission on Human Relations, Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law Inc, Erie House, John Marshall Law School, Illinois Department of Human Rights, Latino Policy Forum, Legal Assistance Foundation, Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit [www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org).

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