



## westchester residential opportunities

Since 1968

Saving homes, saving families™

February 26, 2025

New York State Legislature  
2025 Joint Budget Hearing  
Housing

By email to [wamchair@nyassembly.gov](mailto:wamchair@nyassembly.gov) and [financechair@nysenate.gov](mailto:financechair@nysenate.gov)

### **Re: Funding \$7 Million for Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking Program**

Dear Hon. Committee Chairs,

On behalf of Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc., a non-profit housing counseling agency based in White Plains, we would like to thank Chair Rosenthal and Chair Kavanagh, as well as Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger and Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair J. Gary Pretlow for the opportunity to submit this testimony on the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025-26 budget.

**Fair Housing Ask:** We request that the budget allocate **\$7 million** for the **Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking program**, which funds a network of nonprofit fair housing organizations across the state, including ours, doing systemic and full-service fair housing work. The Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking program is currently funded at \$4 million for this fiscal year, while the current executive budget only proposes \$2 million for this program in SFY 2025-26.

The Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking program is currently funded at \$4 million/year, which has allowed fair housing organizations to hire new staff, conduct systemic fair housing tests, and educate our communities on their fair housing rights and obligations. Boosting funding to \$7 million will cover a wider range of crucial fair housing activities, including intake and direct advocacy on behalf of clients. It will also allow us to provide fair housing services in areas not currently served by any fair housing organization, including Orange and Ulster counties.

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This funding is even more crucial now that the historically strong federal funding of fair housing work, through US HUD FHIP and CDBG programming, is in dire jeopardy.

In her Executive Budget, the Governor is threatening to fund the program at just \$2 million, which would be a significant setback for fair housing in New York. We urge the State to step up to protect the rights of New Yorkers to live in the communities of their choice, free from discrimination. (We also support legislative efforts by Senator Kavanagh to codify that program into law permanently.)

For more information, please feel free to contact me at [mzarfes@wroinc.org](mailto:mzarfes@wroinc.org) or by phone at 914-645-4222.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marlene Zarfes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marlene" and last name "Zarfes" clearly legible.

Marlene Zarfes  
Executive Director