

# WHO IS FAIR SHARE HOUSING CENTER?

Fair Share Housing Center is a nonprofit advocacy organization that uses legal, policy, and community-building strategies to dismantle decades of racial and economic discrimination in New Jersey and nationally that excludes people from the opportunity to live in safe, healthy, and affordable housing.

Fair Share Housing Center was founded in 1975 after the landmark civil rights case that initiated the creation of the Mount Laurel Doctrine. That case, known as Mount Laurel I, outlawed exclusionary zoning and required all New Jersey municipalities to provide their “fair share” of their region’s affordable housing. Mount Laurel I and subsequent decisions have created one of the **strongest frameworks** in the country to prevent and address residential segregation. Fair Share Housing Center was initially founded to protect the Mount Laurel Doctrine, and in the nearly fifty years since its creation, has expanded its work to more broadly address racial and economic discrimination in housing in New Jersey and beyond.

## OUR WORK

At FSHC we believe that housing is central to the fight for racial and economic justice. Access to safe, healthy, and affordable housing is crucial to creating integrated communities that reflect the economic and racial diversity of our state and country.

### Creating Inclusive Communities

All individuals thrive in diverse, inclusive, and vibrant communities, but far too often, this ideal is frustrated by harmful policies like exclusionary zoning, that perpetuate residential segregation by preventing the construction of affordable housing. For generations, affluent white communities in the suburbs have benefitted from maintaining separate and unequal education, policing, economic, and health systems, while ignoring the devastating impact of segregation on marginalized communities. Gentrifying urban centers also furthers racial and economic segregation because low-income families and communities of color are priced out and displaced from their neighborhoods as they are being “revitalized.” Fortunately, New Jersey has the strongest framework in the nation to fight residential segregation and exclusionary zoning through the development of affordable housing. As Fair Share Housing Center works to enforce the Mount Laurel Doctrine, we also advocate for policies that prevent displacement and promote the development of more affordable housing.

## Safeguarding Access to Housing

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. But public and private tenant screening policies disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color, and they often make it difficult for individuals to secure housing. At FSHC, we advocate in New Jersey and nationally for tenant screening policies that prevent discrimination and prioritize individual circumstances. Third-party screening agencies, which are frequently contracted by landlords to perform reviews of prospective tenants, often reduce people to a number—without any regard to who they are beyond specific factors. Securing a home is much more than a business transaction for potential tenants. Tenant screening policies at the federal, state, and local level must reflect that humanity.

## Ensuring Equitable Disaster Relief

With each major disaster the need to rebuild equitably and enhance resilience against future disaster grows all the more urgent, yet policies and recovery processes do not do nearly enough to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color are able to shape the process, access the resources they need to rebuild their lives, and proactively protect against future climate-related harm. Disaster and recovery spending disproportionately benefits white and wealthier Americans, widening existing inequalities, and climate change is projected to place millions more people at risk over the next decade. We must do better. Fair Share Housing Center has a strong foundation for work in disaster recovery, having secured the largest federal Fair Housing Act settlement in American history after Hurricane Sandy. Today, we continue to advocate for equity and fairness in disaster relief and climate change policies on the state and federal levels.

## Addressing Racial and Economic Disparities

To truly achieve racial and economic justice, we must tackle disparities from multiple angles. At Fair Share Housing Center we see housing as a central tenet of community resilience, while also recognizing the interconnectedness of housing and other social issues. We partner with community stakeholders, government officials, and advocacy organizations to address the racial wealth gap and secure investments that benefit communities of color. Our current work in this area includes convening the United Black Agenda, participating on the Governor's Wealth Disparities Task Force, supporting legislation to tackle wealth disparities, and advocating for equity in the newly established cannabis industry.

At Fair Share Housing Center, our present work is informed by our past. We center those communities that are most harmed by our failing systems and discriminatory policies when we advocate for solutions. We have embodied the fighting spirit of organizers and leaders seeking to change racially and economically segregated communities since our inception, and we will continue that fight until there is housing justice for all.