

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4969

To authorize funds to prevent housing discrimination through the use of nationwide testing, to increase funds for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 7, 2020

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. KAINE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To authorize funds to prevent housing discrimination through the use of nationwide testing, to increase funds for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Housing Fairness Act
5 of 2020”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION.**

2 In this Act, the term “Secretary” means the Sec-
3 retary of Housing and Urban Development.

4 **SEC. 3. TESTING FOR DISCRIMINATION.**

5 (a) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITY UNDER FHIP.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 561(a) of the Hous-
7 ing and Community Development Act of 1987 (42
8 U.S.C. 3616a(a)) is amended—

9 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and
10 (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively,
11 and adjusting the margins accordingly;

12 (B) in the matter preceding subparagraph
13 (A), as so redesignated—

14 (i) by striking “The Secretary” and
15 inserting the following:

16 “(1) GRANTS, CONTRACTS, AND COOPERATIVE
17 AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary”; and

18 (ii) by inserting after “discriminatory
19 housing practices” the following: “or, in
20 the case of grants, contracts, or coopera-
21 tive agreements for activities under sub-
22 paragraph (C), with qualified private, non-
23 profit fair housing enforcement organiza-
24 tions that have demonstrated expertise in
25 managing and implementing regional or

1 national testing programs to address sys-
 2 temic fair housing issues”;

3 (C) in subparagraph (A), as so redesign-
 4 nated, by striking “and” at the end;

5 (D) in subparagraph (B), as so redesign-
 6 nated, by striking “paragraph (1).” and insert-
 7 ing “subparagraph (A); and”; and

8 (E) by adding at the end the following:

9 “(C) programs of regional or national test-
 10 ing and investigations to—

11 “(i)(I) detect and document dif-
 12 ferences in the treatment of persons seek-
 13 ing to rent or purchase housing or obtain
 14 or refinance a home mortgage loan; and

15 “(II) measure patterns of differential
 16 treatment because of the status of a
 17 renter, home buyer, or borrower as a mem-
 18 ber of a protected class under the Fair
 19 Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.); and

20 “(ii) measure the prevalence, nature,
 21 and extent of discriminatory practices cov-
 22 ered under the Fair Housing Act.

23 “(2) ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS.—

24 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The results of any
 25 testing and investigations under paragraph

(1)(C) may be used as the basis for the Secretary, any Federal agency authorized to bring such an enforcement action, or any State or local government or agency, public or private nonprofit organization or institution, or other aggrieved party within the meaning of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.) or other substantially equivalent State or local fair housing law, or other public or private entity with which the Secretary has entered into a contract or cooperative agreement under this section to commence, undertake, or pursue any investigation or enforcement action to remedy any discriminatory housing practice (as that term is defined in section 802 of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3602)) uncovered as a result of the testing and investigations.

“(B) TESTING.—Testing conducted under paragraph (1)(C) shall not constitute a violation of any provision of criminal law or the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).”.

(2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 561(a)(2) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 (42 U.S.C.

1 3616a(a)(2)) is amended by striking “subsection
2 (a)(1)” and inserting “subsection (a)(1)(A)”.

3 (b) REGULATIONS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
5 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
6 retary shall issue regulations that apply the min-
7 imum tester training standards required under sec-
8 tion 125.107 of title 24, Code of Federal Regula-
9 tions (or any successor regulation), to organizations
10 conducting testing under paragraph (1)(C) of sec-
11 tion 561(a) of the Housing and Community Develop-
12 ment Act of 1987 (42 U.S.C. 3616a(a)), as added
13 by subsection (a)(1)(E) of this section.

14 (2) APPLICABILITY TO ALL TESTING ACTIVI-
15 TIES.—On and after the date on which the regula-
16 tions issued under paragraph (1) take effect, the
17 minimum tester training standards described in that
18 paragraph shall apply to any testing activities con-
19 ducted under section 561 of the Housing and Com-
20 munity Development Act of 1987 (42 U.S.C.
21 3616a), as amended by subsection (a)(1) of this sec-
22 tion.

1 **SEC. 4. FAIR HOUSING INITIATIVES PROGRAM.**

2 (a) AMENDMENTS TO PROGRAM.—Section 561 of the
3 Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 (42
4 U.S.C. 3616a) is amended—

5 (1) in subsection (b)—

6 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “private
7 nonprofit” and inserting “qualified”; and

8 (B) in paragraph (2), in the matter pre-
9 ceding subparagraph (A), by striking “private
10 nonprofit” and inserting “qualified”;

11 (2) in subsection (c), by adding at the end the
12 following:

13 “(3) PROGRAM-EARNED INCOME.—No restric-
14 tion on the use of program-earned income received
15 by a qualified fair housing enforcement organization
16 shall apply after the grant period for the organiza-
17 tion ends.”;

18 (3) in subsection (d)—

19 (A) in paragraph (1)—

20 (i) in subparagraph (C), by striking
21 “and” at the end;

22 (ii) in subparagraph (D), by striking
23 the period and inserting “; and”; and

24 (iii) by inserting after subparagraph
25 (D) the following:

26 “(E) websites and other media outlets.”;

1 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “or other
2 public or private entities” and inserting “or
3 other public or private nonprofit entities”;

4 (C) in paragraph (3), by striking “or other
5 public or private entities” and inserting “or
6 other public or private nonprofit entities”; and

7 (D) by adding at the end the following:

8 “(4) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding any other
9 provision of this section, a State or local agency cer-
10 tified by the Secretary under section 810(f) of the
11 Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3610(f)) may receive
12 assistance under this subsection only to carry out
13 activities eligible for assistance under this subsection
14 in areas in which no qualified fair housing enforce-
15 ment organization is available to carry out those ac-
16 tivities.

17 “(5) ELIGIBILITY.—Notwithstanding any other
18 provision of this section, if an award of funding
19 under subsection (b) for multiple fiscal years has
20 been made to a qualified fair housing enforcement
21 organization, the organization shall be, subject only
22 to the availability of amounts provided in appropria-
23 tion Acts, eligible to receive funding under this sub-
24 section for each fiscal year covered by the award
25 under subsection (b).”;

1 (4) in subsection (e)—

2 (A) in paragraph (1)—

3 (i) by inserting “CONGRESSIONAL NO-
4 TIFICATION.—” after “(1)”; and

5 (ii) by striking “Banking, Finance
6 and Urban Affairs” and inserting “Finan-
7 cial Services”; and

8 (B) by adding at the end the following:

9 “(2) PRIORITY.—In providing assistance under
10 this section with respect to a metropolitan statistical
11 area for which there are multiple applications for as-
12 sistance, the Secretary shall give priority to applica-
13 tions submitted by qualified fair housing enforce-
14 ment organizations that have experience in con-
15 ducting fair housing enforcement activities.”;

16 (5) by striking subsection (g) and inserting the
17 following:

18 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

19 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be
20 appropriated to carry out this section—

21 “(A) \$58,000,000 for each of fiscal years
22 2021 through 2025, of which—

23 “(i) \$55,000,000 shall be available for
24 any activities under this section other than

1 programs under subsection (a)(1)(C), of
2 which—

3 “(I) not less than \$38,000,000
4 shall be for private enforcement initia-
5 tives authorized under subsection (b);

6 “(II) not less than \$1,500,000
7 shall be for the fair housing organiza-
8 tions initiative under subsection (c);

9 “(III) not less than \$10,000,000
10 shall be for the education and out-
11 reach initiative under subsection (d),
12 of which—

13 “(aa) not less than
14 \$8,000,000 shall be for local edu-
15 cation and outreach activities;
16 and

17 “(bb) not less than
18 \$2,000,000 shall be for national
19 media activities; and

20 “(IV) any remaining amounts
21 shall be used for any program activi-
22 ties authorized under this section; and

23 “(ii) \$3,000,000 shall be available
24 only for programs under subsection
25 (a)(1)(C); and

1 “(B) \$70,000,000 for each of fiscal years
2 2026 through 2031, of which—

3 “(i) \$65,000,000 shall be available for
4 any activities under this section other than
5 programs under subsection (a)(1)(C), of
6 which—

7 “(I) not less than \$44,000,000
8 shall be for private enforcement initia-
9 tives authorized under subsection (b);

10 “(II) not less than \$1,500,000
11 shall be for the fair housing organiza-
12 tions initiative under subsection (c);

13 “(III) not less than \$12,500,000
14 shall be for the education and out-
15 reach initiative under subsection (d),
16 of which—

17 “(aa) not less than
18 \$10,000,000 shall be for local
19 education and outreach activities;
20 and

21 “(bb) not less than
22 \$2,500,000 shall be for national
23 media activities; and

1 “(IV) any remaining amounts
2 shall be used for any program activi-
3 ties authorized under this section; and
4 “(ii) \$5,000,000 shall be available
5 only for programs under subsection
6 (a)(1)(C).

7 “(2) AVAILABILITY.—Any amount appropriated
8 under this section shall remain available until ex-
9 pended to carry out the provisions of this section.

10 “(3) AWARD OF FUNDING.—

11 “(A) NOTICE.—Not later than 90 days
12 after the date of enactment of any Act making
13 amounts available to carry out this section, the
14 Secretary shall issue a Notice of Funding Avail-
15 ability with respect to the amounts.

16 “(B) AWARD.—Not later than 180 days
17 after the date of enactment of any Act making
18 amounts available to carry out this section, the
19 Secretary shall award the amounts.”;

20 (6) in subsection (h)(1), in the matter following
21 subparagraph (C), by inserting “and meets the cri-
22 teria described in subparagraphs (A) and (C)” be-
23 fore the period at the end; and

24 (7) in subsection (j)—

1 (A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1),
2 by inserting “regarding that fiscal year,” after
3 “comprehensive report”;

4 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “and the
5 use of such funds during the preceding fiscal
6 year” and inserting “, the use of such funds,
7 and outcomes such as the number of housing
8 units made available and accessible to protected
9 classes under the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C.
10 3601 et seq.)”;

11 (C) in paragraph (3), by striking “during
12 the preceding fiscal year”; and

13 (D) in paragraph (4), by striking “during
14 the preceding fiscal year”.

15 (b) STUDY.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
17 a study to determine—

18 (A) the feasibility, efficiency, and effective-
19 ness of converting the Fair Housing Initiatives
20 Program under section 561 of the Housing and
21 Community Development Act of 1987 (42
22 U.S.C. 3616a), as amended by this Act, into a
23 noncompetitive entitlement program to provide
24 general operating funding to qualified fair hous-

1 ing enforcement organizations, as defined in
2 subsection (h) of that section;

3 (B) the appropriate levels of funding for
4 such a program, taking into consideration the
5 number of such qualified fair housing enforce-
6 ment organizations; and

7 (C) the factors that should be considered
8 in providing for an equitable distribution to
9 qualified fair housing enforcement organiza-
10 tions.

11 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the
12 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
13 submit a report to Congress setting forth the results
14 of the study conducted under paragraph (1), which
15 shall include any recommendations regarding such
16 conversion of the program.

17 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

18 It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary
19 should—

20 (1) fully comply with the requirements of sec-
21 tion 561(d) of the Housing and Community Develop-
22 ment Act of 1987 (42 U.S.C. 3616a(d)), as amend-
23 ed by this Act, to establish, design, and maintain a
24 national education and outreach program to provide

1 a centralized, coordinated effort for the development
2 and dissemination of—

3 (A) materials and information about the
4 fair housing rights of individuals who seek to
5 rent, purchase, sell, or facilitate the sale of a
6 home; and

7 (B) materials and information about the
8 fair housing responsibilities of industry profes-
9 sionals providing products and services covered
10 under the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et
11 seq.);

12 (2) expend for the education and outreach pro-
13 grams described in paragraph (1) all amounts ap-
14 propriated for those programs;

15 (3) fully reinstate the regulations promulgated
16 on July 16, 2015 (80 Fed. Reg. 42271), regarding
17 the fair housing obligations of each recipient of Fed-
18 eral housing and community development funds to
19 affirmatively further fair housing, as that term is
20 used in the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et
21 seq.); and

22 (4) fully comply with the requirements of sec-
23 tion 810(a) of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C.
24 3610(a)).

1 **SEC. 6. GRANTS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES TO**
2 **STUDY HOUSING DISCRIMINATION.**

3 (a) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out
4 a competitive matching grant program to assist public and
5 private nonprofit organizations in—

6 (1) conducting comprehensive studies that ex-
7 amine—

8 (A) the causes of housing discrimination
9 and segregation;

10 (B) the effects of housing discrimination
11 and segregation on education, poverty, economic
12 development, health, and other socioeconomic
13 factors; or

14 (C) the incidences, causes, and effects of
15 housing discrimination based on veteran and
16 military status; and

17 (2) implementing pilot projects that test solu-
18 tions that will help prevent or alleviate housing dis-
19 crimination and segregation.

20 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
21 under this section, a public or private nonprofit organiza-
22 tion shall—

23 (1) submit an application to the Secretary that
24 contains—

1 (A) the issues the applicant will address
 2 and a justification for the need to address those
 3 issues;

4 (B) the applicant's experience in formu-
 5 lating or carrying out programs or activities de-
 6 scribed in this section; and

7 (C) the geographical area and period of
 8 time to be studied; and

9 (2) agree to provide matching non-Federal
 10 funds for 10 percent of the total amount of the
 11 grant, which matching funds may include monetary
 12 donations and items donated on an in-kind contribu-
 13 tion basis.

14 (c) PARTNERSHIPS WITH ACADEMIC INSTITU-
 15 TIONS.—A public or private nonprofit organization apply-
 16 ing for a grant under this section may partner with an
 17 academic or educational organization or institution for the
 18 purpose of carrying out activities assisted with the grant
 19 amounts.

20 (d) REPORT.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit
 22 a report to Congress on a biennial basis that pro-
 23 vides a detailed summary of the results of the com-
 24 prehensive studies and pilot projects carried out
 25 under subsection (a), together with any rec-

1 ommendations or proposals for legislative or admin-
 2 istrative actions to address any issues raised by the
 3 studies and pilot projects.

4 (2) CONCURRENT SUBMISSION.—The Secretary
 5 may submit the reports required under paragraph
 6 (1) as part of the reports prepared in accordance
 7 with paragraphs (2) and (6) of section 808(e) of the
 8 Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3608(e)) and section
 9 561(j) of the Housing and Community Development
 10 Act of 1987 (42 U.S.C. 3616a(j)).

11 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 12 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
 13 \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

14 **SEC. 7. LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.**

15 (a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “lob-
 16 bying” means an activity the costs of which are unallow-
 17 able under paragraph 25 of attachment B to Circular A–
 18 122 of the Office of Management and Budget, entitled
 19 “Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations”.

20 (b) PROHIBITION.—None of the funds made available
 21 under this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, may
 22 be used for any political activities, political advocacy, or
 23 lobbying, or for expenses for travel to engage in political

- 1 activities or preparation of or provision of advice on tax
- 2 returns.

