



Janet Murguía, President

National Office
Raul Yzaguirre Building
1126 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202.785.1670
Fax: 202.776.1792
www.nclr.org

March 9, 2007

Secretary Alfonso Jackson
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

RE: Limited English Proficiency Guidance

Dear Secretary Jackson:

As members of the National Council of La Raza Homeownership Network (NHN) and recipients of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we applaud the HUD guidance on how to serve limited English proficient (LEP) individuals. Our organizations target families living in Latino communities, many of whom are Spanish-speaking preferred. In many cases, if it were not for the work of our agencies, these families would not be able to find services in their language. The ability of all families who speak a language other than English to access services is very important to us.

According to 2005 data, more than 19% of Americans speak a language other than English at home. Housing service providers must adapt to provide services to these families. We are aware of concerns that the guidance presents undue cost burdens on HUD grantees. However, our organizations have been responding to the language needs of our communities for years, even decades in some cases, and have managed to remain within our budget. Moreover, NHN organizations have stepped up where necessary and provided services in languages other than Spanish, including Russian and French/Creole in response to the needs of their clients. Often, our housing counselors are called upon to provide translation services for area nonprofits, banks, and loan-closing agents.

We are committed to continuing this kind of service to our communities. We have seen several models that show how various stakeholders have worked together to promote language access. For example, in the context of LEP guidance issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), industry trade associations, practitioners, civil rights organizations, and health advocates were able to work together to produce guiding principles and standardized materials that promote language access compliance. We believe a similar model could work for housing advocates and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the guidance.

Language access is critical to ensuring that all families have access to fair and safe housing and related services. Latino families are working hard to learn English, but they need services in their first language until they reach a level of proficiency that allows them to understand

Regional Offices: Atlanta, Georgia • Chicago, Illinois • Los Angeles, California • New York, New York
Phoenix, Arizona • Sacramento, California • San Antonio, Texas • San Juan, Puerto Rico

LA RAZA: The Hispanic People of the New World

complex transactions. We stand ready to work with HUD and other stakeholders to promote language access in a reasonable and fair manner.

Sincerely,

National Council of La Raza

Brighton Park Neighborhood Development Center (Illinois)
Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation (Oklahoma)
Del Norte Community Development Corporation (Colorado)
Chicanos Por La Causa, Phoenix (Arizona)
Chicanos Por La Causa, Tucson (Arizona)
Community Housing Resources of Arizona (Arizona)
East Las Vegas Community Development Corporation (Nevada)
El Centro, Inc. (Kansas)
El Centro de La Raza (Washington)
El Concilio (California)
HBC Services Inc. (Wisconsin)\
Home Loan Counseling Center – Sacramento (California)
Housing America Corporation (Arizona)
Housing For Nevada (Nevada)
Housing Our Communities (Arizona)
La Fuerza Unida (New York)
Lawrence Community Works (Massachusetts)
Latino Community Development Agency (Oklahoma)
Montebello Housing Development Corporation (California)
New Economics for Women (California)
Spanish Coalition for Housing (Illinois)
Southwest Housing Solutions (Michigan)
Tejano Center for Community Concerns (Texas)
Visionary Homebuilders of California (California)
Watts Century Latino Organization (California)
YWCA El Paso (Texas)
YWCA Las Cruces (New Mexico)