

March 27, 2023

For additional information, please contact:

Jessie Weber

Brown, Goldstein & Levy

443-257-5885

jweber@browngold.com

Lawsuit Alleging Racial Discrimination by Bank of America in Its Maintenance of Foreclosed Homes Allowed to Proceed

Civil Rights Groups Presented Extensive Evidence in Federal Court that the Bank Poorly Maintained Homes in Black and Latino Neighborhoods

Washington, D.C. — A federal court has found that the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and other fair housing organizations have presented sufficient evidence that Bank of America discriminated based on race in its maintenance and marketing of foreclosed-upon properties for the case to go to a jury. On Friday, Judge Stephanie A. Gallagher of the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland resoundingly rejected Bank of America’s attempt to have the Fair Housing Act case dismissed.

NFHA, 19 other fair housing organizations, and two homeowners in Maryland filed the lawsuit in 2018 against Bank of America, N.A., and its maintenance vendor, Safeguard Properties Management, LLC. The lawsuit alleges that for over a decade, across [37 different metropolitan areas](#), Bank of America and Safeguard failed to maintain and market bank-owned homes in Black and Latino neighborhoods as well as in majority-White neighborhoods. Properties in Black and Latino neighborhoods were three times more likely to have significant maintenance or marketing deficiencies.

“We are thrilled that the court has recognized the merits of our thorough investigation and concluded that the evidence of discrimination should go to a jury,” said **Lisa Rice, President and CEO of NFHA**. “Other national banks and financial institutions, such as Fannie Mae and Wells Fargo, have chosen to collaborate with us to remedy racial disparities in maintenance and marketing of bank-owned homes. Unfortunately, Bank of America has chosen contentious litigation over problem solving, which is completely at odds with the bank’s stated commitment to advancing racial justice.”

Prior to filing the lawsuit, NFHA and its partners investigated the exterior maintenance and marketing of more than 1,400 Bank of America-owned homes in working- and middle-class White, Black, and Latino neighborhoods. The investigation found consistently poor maintenance and marketing practices by Bank of America and Safeguard in communities of color. Bank-owned homes in these areas were significantly more likely to have deficiencies like overgrown

grass, broken windows, unsecured doors, unsecured and poorly maintained pools, and accumulated trash.

NFHA is joined in the lawsuit by Wanda Onafuwa of Baltimore and Chevelle Bushnell and her son, Jalen Bushnell, of District Heights, Maryland. Both families' townhomes suffered serious physical damage because neighboring Bank of America-owned homes were unsecured and poorly maintained.

Click [here](#) for more background on the case. Click [here](#) to read NFHA's 2014 report outlining how financial institutions discriminate in the treatment of foreclosed homes.

The plaintiffs are represented by Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP, a Baltimore-based law firm.

###

The National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) is the country's only national civil rights organization dedicated solely to eliminating all forms of housing and lending discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for all people. As the trade association for over 170 fair housing and justice-centered organizations and individuals throughout the U.S. and its territories, NFHA works to dismantle longstanding barriers to equity and build diverse, inclusive, well-resourced communities.

About Brown Goldstein & Levy, LLP

Founded in 1982, Brown, Goldstein & Levy is a 20-lawyer law firm based in Baltimore, Maryland, with an office in Washington, DC. The firm has maintained a thriving national practice handling cases of every stripe, from commercial litigation and civil rights to criminal defense and complex family law. Above all else, Brown, Goldstein & Levy is a client-centered law firm and has decades of experiences bringing passionate, effective advocacy to our clients' fights for justice.