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**Chicago Nonprofit LUCHA Receives National Grant for
Longtime Fight for Affordable Housing in Chicago**

CHICAGO, IL – October 10, 2018 – Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) today awarded Chicago-based LUCHA, one of the Midwest’s premier affordable housing organizations, its 2018 Justice Grant. OFN, a national network of community development finance (CDFI) lenders, presents the Justice Grant annually to an organization with a mission that supports economic, political, or social justice in the U.S.

Like many areas nationwide, Chicago has a critical shortage of affordable housing. While the city has seen a decrease in foreclosures over the past five years, affordable rentals remain elusive. In some gentrifying parts of the city, smaller multi-family rental units are turned into single family homes or rising rents displace longtime residents. In disinvested areas, gentrification isn’t a threat but neglect is — people are left to live in unsafe housing or units are left abandoned. According to the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, the demand for affordable rentals outpaces the availability.

LUCHA — which stands for Latin United Community Housing Association and is the Spanish word for “struggle” — has been a leader in the fight for affordable housing since 1982. A U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-approved housing counseling agency and Community Housing Development Organization, LUCHA works against discrimination, housing displacement, systemic inequity, and patterns of injustice that impact members of Chicago’s low- to moderate-income Latino and African-American communities.

The organization serves more than 3,000 clients per year, in English and Spanish, through advocacy and legal services, education, affordable housing development and management, and connection to community resources.

“LUCHA is founded on the principle that quality affordable housing is a basic human right, and it’s our mission to empower people to claim this right for themselves, their families, and their communities,” said LUCHA Executive Director Juan Carlos Linares, who accepted the award today during OFN’s Annual Conference, held this year in Chicago. “We are proud to receive the Justice Grant. This honor is a



wonderful recognition of our roots, which are planted firmly in social, economic, and political justice.”

Anchored in Chicago’s Humboldt Park area, LUCHA was born from local organizers working to address rampant displacement of the Puerto Rican community in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the nonprofit’s base and city footprint has expanded.

“Decent affordable places to live are critical to healthy communities. People simply cannot thrive when they don’t have safe and clean housing they can afford,” said Lisa Mensah, OFN President and CEO. “LUCHA plays a vital role in ensuring affordable housing options exist in Chicago. It sees the full picture of what’s needed to fill housing gaps and provides a deep and needed array of services and programs to help people fight for fair housing. OFN is thrilled to uplift this longtime champion of equity with our Justice Award.”

Over the past 36 years, LUCHA has helped more than 68,000 low- to moderate-income families rent affordable housing, obtain Section 8 rental assistance, purchase good homes, improve dilapidated buildings, make homes more accessible and energy efficient, and beautify their neighborhoods.

About LUCHA

Founded in 1982, LUCHA has evolved into one of the Midwest’s premiere housing advocates. LUCHA has effectively organized community members to fight for better housing services from both public and private sectors. It also works with community residents to access housing products and services, provide housing counseling, and coordinate technical assistance. Engaging in this work led LUCHA to develop subsequent buildings using green construction, Passive House, and integrated health and wellness programming. Today, LUCHA continues advancing housing as a human right through these initiatives which ensure that everyone has access to resources which enable their households to thrive. lucha.org/.

About OFN

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), the national network of community development financial institutions (CDFIs), strives to ensure low-income and other under-resourced communities have access to affordable, responsible financial products and services. Members of OFN are CDFIs that deliver responsible lending to help low-income communities join the economic mainstream. Through 2016, OFN’s network originated \$54 billion in financing in rural, urban, and Native



communities. This financing has helped to create or maintain more than 1,202,000 jobs, start or expand more than 256,000 businesses and microenterprises, and support the development or rehabilitation of nearly 2 million housing units and more than 10,000 community facility projects. For more information, visit www.ofn.org.

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