

Trouble Getting in the Door: Source of Income Discrimination

Rhode Island Housing

Legislative Advocacy: State Advocacy

HFA Staff Contact

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Ending Source of Income Discrimination in Rhode Island

After a multi-year outreach and advocacy effort, on April 13, 2021, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Fair Housing Practices Act (S-0561, H-5257) to protect renters from housing discrimination based on their Source of Income, **making Rhode Island the 16th state to enact these protections**. This change couldn't have come at a more critical time as Rhode Island, like so many other states, faces a critical shortage of housing, and rising prices put existing apartments out of reach for more and more low and moderate-income households. **The problem is particularly acute for renters who depend on rental assistance vouchers and other non-traditional sources of income, which many landlords may be unwilling to accept.**

This legislation was not passed over night. RIHousing, in partnership with the Public Housing Association of RI (PHARI), took a leadership role in **building a broad coalition of community-based organizations and implementing a grassroots campaign to pass this important legislation**. This advocacy effort documented the scope of the problem, shared compelling multi-media materials to convince policy makers that the legislation was needed, and implemented a lobbying strategy to engage legislators in order to push the bills over the finish line.

Documenting the Need:

Members of the coalition knew from personal experience that **income discrimination was a significant barrier to accessing housing for low-income renters**. But there was no data available to quantify the scope of the problem. Therefore, an important priority for the campaign was to develop and disseminate substantive data documenting Source of Income discrimination in Rhode Island.

Research and Analysis

Coalition partner Southcoast Fair Housing (SCFH), a nonprofit fair housing organization serving Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, researched Source of Income discrimination in Rhode Island beginning in February 2018. The organization inquired by phone about 100 recently advertised apartments to assess whether providers would consider renting their available units to a tenant with a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV). ***This audit represented the first of its type in Rhode Island.***

In November 2018, SCFH undertook a more in-depth analysis with coalition member Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE). Together, they monitored and audited online rental advertisements and audited additional housing providers by phone. In 2019, SCFH's report titled "[*It's About the Voucher*](#)" was released, detailing the study's key findings. SCFH uncovered systemic discrimination against voucher recipients during the course of its research: **It revealed that HCV program participants were turned away from 93% of units due to Source of Income discrimination and income limits**. Further, 63% of landlords contacted by phone refused to rent to any tenant with a voucher and 11% were uncertain about doing so.

The coalition presented the report at a press conference at the Rhode Island State House, attended by coalition members, bill sponsors and tenants who had personally experienced Source of Income discrimination. **Its findings** were widely covered by the media and **became core elements of the campaign to pass this important legislation**.

RIHousing also worked with PHARI to poll public housing authorities in the state about the challenges their HCV program participants faced finding housing they could afford. **More than 50% of RIHousing's voucher recipients reported being discriminated against because they would be using a rental**

assistance voucher to pay their rent. These surveys were shared with General Assembly members representing districts served by these PHAs.

Illustrating the Problem:

While quantitative data was essential to demonstrating that Source of Income discrimination existed in Rhode Island and was a serious barrier to low-income tenants having access to housing, communicating that information in a compelling way was equally important to the campaign's success. Many communication tools were used across multiple media to share key points of the Fair Housing Practices Act.

Visual Presentations

The data in the SCFH report strongly supported the need for protections against Source of Income discrimination but was nuanced and needed graphic support to fully illustrate the impact this practice was having on renters using HCVs. Data on results from the SCFH report was incorporated into designed graphics used at the press conference release of the report and at bill hearings and events. They detailed discrimination in advertising that phone audits uncovered and the limited number of units voucher holders had access to once listings over the voucher limit or that didn't accept vouchers were removed.

Personal Stories

Personal stories of tenants, voucher administrator staff and service providers all captured firsthand accounts of Source of Income discrimination. Stories were captured on written forms, as testimony to House and Senate Committees, and on video. These stories were featured at many public and press events and helped make a personal connection to the issue for legislators.

Information Pieces

Key information pieces captured the issue of Source of Income discrimination and how legislation would address the issue. A one-pager was created and shared with partners and policy makers alike. Postcards and templated documents allowed tenants and coalition members to share their input with committees and legislators. Ads featuring the stipulation "*No Section 8*" were helpful for legislators who believed that this kind of discrimination was already illegal, or who didn't believe that it happened here in Rhode Island.

Strategy for Success:

A solid foundation in quantitative data and effective communication tools were essential elements of the campaign. But the real secret to its success was the breadth of the coalition and the detailed strategy for winning passage of the legislation.

The Coalition

Source of Income discrimination legislation had been introduced in the RI General Assembly since at least 2016. At that time the effort was led by advocates for the homeless and supporters were primarily homeless and affordable housing organizations. Beginning in 2018, RIHousing took a much more active role in support of the legislation, eventually partnering with PHARI to lead the coalition. An early priority was to expand the number and diversity of organizations supporting the legislation. By the time the legislation was enacted into law in 2021, the coalition had grown to over 40 organizations across multiple sectors and stakeholder groups. Many members represented various populations impacted by discrimination and were as diverse as the ACLU and interfaith organizations. Others were brought on through legislative compromise after being initial opponents of the bill.

RIHousing staff led regular meetings of a core group of coalition members to create strategies for the upcoming General Assembly session. During the session the group led the implementation of that strategy and coordination with the broader coalition around lobbying days, events and other activities. The full coalition participated in major campaign activities, including bill hearings, public events, lobby days at the State House, collection of personal experiences involving discrimination, or to connect with key legislators.

The Strategy:

While campaign strategy evolved over time in response to changing conditions, the major elements included:

- **Awareness raising events:** Press events, coalition rallies at the State House, and partner events brought attention to the issue of Source of Income discrimination and headlined it as a legislative priority.
- **Earned media:** The coalition was successful in getting broad media coverage on the discrimination issue. Coalition members wrote op-eds and pitched stories involving local organizations or individuals.
- **Grassroots lobbying days:** The campaign involved multiple lobbying days during the General Assembly session. Coalition members would train volunteers/participants on lobbying and target key legislators. Results were tabulated and helped inform which members the coalition would focus on. Many lobbying days coincided with House or Senate hearings on the bill.
- **Grassroots outreach activities:** Coordinated outreach to General Assembly members with post cards and online template letters of support were targeted to legislators of the writer's district and were distributed at events and then delivered to General Assembly leadership.
- **Strategic participation in hearings:** People with personal experiences with Source of Income discrimination, as well as landlords supportive of the legislation, gave written and in-person testimony. Public officials, including General Treasurer Magaziner, Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza and Director of Veterans Affairs, Kasim Yarn, were also highlighted.
- **Municipal engagement:** Facing opposition among key General Assembly leaders, coalition members reached out to their municipal leaders encouraging them to adopt local Source of Income Discrimination ordinances. Before statewide legislation was passed, two municipalities had passed Source of Income Discrimination ordinances (including the City of Providence).

Sharing the Load:

Key to the success of the campaign was the division of responsibility for developing and implementing the legislative strategy among the core group of coalition members. Partners were responsible for several aspects of the campaign including, Source of Income discrimination data, collection of written and video testimony, lobbying days and results, and digital outreach to promote events and activities. All members would make Source of Income discrimination a priority and voice support for it in meetings with legislative leadership.

Sweet Success:

In April 2021, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Fair Housing Practices Act; In the Senate: 36 members voted in favor and 1 opposed; in the House: 64 members in favor with 1 opposed. The legislation was signed by Governor McKee at an event attended by bill sponsors and many coalition members. The Governor presented one of the pens used to sign the bill into law to RIHousing's Director of Government Relations and Policy, Amy Rainone, **in recognition of RIHousing's leadership on this important legislation.**



April 2021: Fair Housing Practices Act is signed into law during National Fair Housing Month.

April 2021: A Facebook live event shares how the law affects tenants and landlords

February 2021: Providence City Council passes SOI ordinance

December 2020: Cranston City Council passes SOI ordinance but it is vetoed

October 2020: Town of Barrington passes SOI ordinance

March 2020: Day of Advocacy at the State House

February 2019: RI Senate passes SOI bill

May 2019: Sign and share letters used to advocate for the SOI bill

May 2019: Interfaith Coalition *Faith in Action* Advocacy Day

May 2019: Panel Discussion at the Annual Interfaith Coalition to End Poverty Conference

April 2019: Op-ed is published on the SOI issue in the Newport Daily News

March & April 2019: HomesRI Lobby Days at the State House Promoting SOI Bill

March 2019: Public Housing Association of RI holds PHARI Day at State House

March 2019: Press coverage of Providence's efforts to pass SOI legislation

February 2019: "It's About the Voucher" is released

January 2019: State House Rally for Legislation

May 2018: Power of Community Advocacy Day

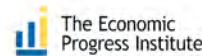
March 2018: Lobby Day at the State House



RIHousing
 Legislative: State Advocacy
Trouble Getting in the Door: Source of Income Discrimination

Income Discrimination Coalition

Made up of over 40 members, the Coalition was a cross-sector, diverse group of organizations working to pass legislation to end source of income discrimination.



RI Continuum of Care (COC)



The Rhode Island Homeless Advocacy Project (RIHAP)





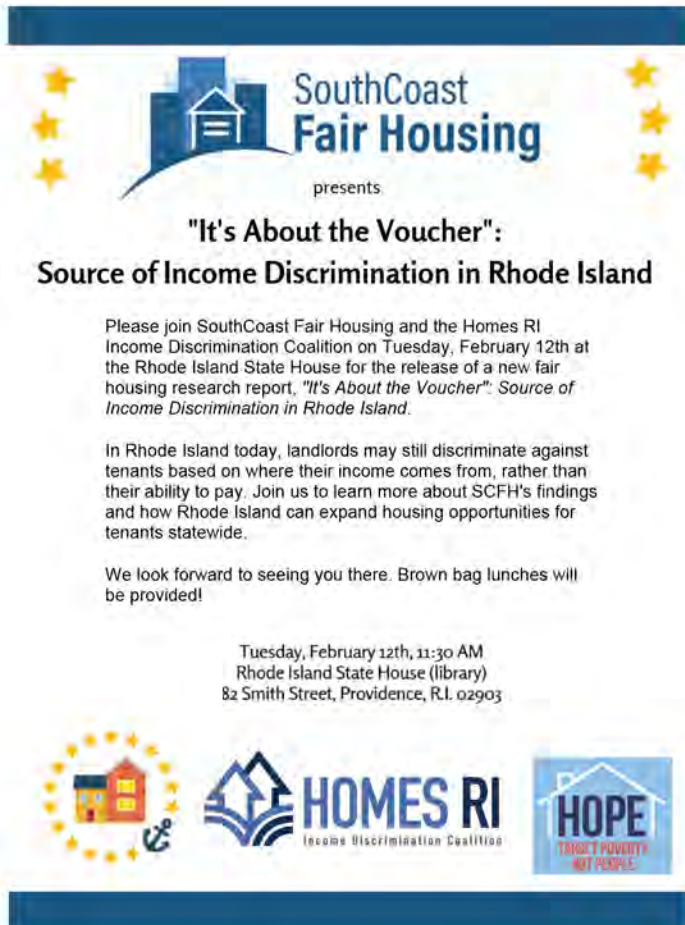
Income Discrimination Coalition - Membership List

1. AARP- Rhode Island chapter
2. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) - RI Chapter
3. American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
4. American Planning Association RI Chapter
5. Center for Justice
6. Crossroads RI
7. DARE
8. East Greenwich Housing Authority
9. Economic Progress Institute
10. House of Hope CDC
11. Housing for People Everywhere (HOPE)
12. The Housing Network of RI
13. HousingWorks RI
14. Mental Health Association of Rhode Island
15. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) RI Chapter
16. New England Regional Council of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NERC NAHRO)
17. Newport Housing Authority
18. Pawtucket Housing Authority
19. Progreso Latino
20. Providence Central Labor Council
21. Providence Housing Authority
22. Public Housing Association of RI
23. Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
24. RI Commission for Human Rights
25. RI Coalition for Children and Families
26. RI Coalition for the Homeless
27. RI Community Action Association
28. RI Continuum of Care
29. The Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disabilities
30. RIHAP
31. RIHousing
32. RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty
33. Rhode Island Kids Count
34. Rhode Island Organizing Project
35. RI Realtors Association
36. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1199 New England
37. Signs of Providence
38. SouthCoast Fair Housing
39. South County Habitat for Humanity
40. United Way of RI
41. WARM Coalition
42. West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA)
43. Westerly Housing Authority

Release of the SCFH Report *It's About the Voucher*

In 2019, the Coalition released SouthCoast Fair Housing's report *It's About the Voucher*, which captured media attention and raised awareness on source of income discrimination.

Flyer to Advertise the Event



The flyer features the SouthCoast Fair Housing logo at the top, flanked by yellow stars. Below the logo, it says 'presents' and then the title of the event: '"It's About the Voucher": Source of Income Discrimination in Rhode Island'. The text invites attendees to join SouthCoast Fair Housing and the Homes RI Income Discrimination Coalition on Tuesday, February 12th at the Rhode Island State House. It also provides details about the event, including the time (11:30 AM) and location (82 Smith Street, Providence, R.I. 02903). At the bottom, there are logos for SouthCoast Fair Housing, Homes RI Income Discrimination Coalition, and HOPE (Target Poverty, Not People).

Excerpt - Press Announcement

NEW RESEARCH BY SOUTHCOST FAIR HOUSING POINTS TO SOURCE OF INCOME DISCRIMINATION IN RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island remains one of the last states in New England not to prohibit income discrimination

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 12, 2019

Pawtucket, R.I. – SouthCoast Fair Housing (SCFH) today released a groundbreaking research report on source of income discrimination in Rhode Island. SOI discrimination affects residents who rely on income other than traditional employment wages to afford safe, quality housing. These tenants face disproportionate stigma in the private rental market and many struggle to find shelter as a result. **Fourteen states now prohibit discrimination against lawful sources of income, but the practice remains legal in Rhode Island.**

SCFH's report, "*It's About the Voucher*": *Source of Income Discrimination in Rhode Island*, quantifies discrimination rates against low-income families who receive a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV). Over 9,300 Rhode Island households rely on the rental subsidy program.

"Our findings are alarming. Source of income discrimination hurts vulnerable tenants, and it's happening in Rhode Island every day," said Claudia Wack, the legal fellow who authored the report. "Families in the HCV program face particularly significant bias. These tenants can afford more than a third of statewide listings, yet will ultimately be turned away from 93% of units." SCFH uncovered systemic online discrimination against voucher recipients during the course of its research. When the organization reached out to local housing providers by phone, 63% refused to rent to any tenant with a voucher. Another 11% expressed uncertainty.

Kristina da Fonseca, SCFH's Executive Director, hopes that the report will contribute to discussions around how to improve Rhode Island's civil rights laws.

"Income discrimination is a fair housing issue," said da Fonseca. "It limits housing choice, reduces access to opportunity, and perpetuates concentrated poverty. That has to change."

Rhode Island legislators have proposed bills to prohibit source of income discrimination during the past two legislative sessions. The HomesRI Income Discrimination Coalition, a diverse group of local organizations and community stakeholders, supports the passage of similar legislation in 2019. Such a bill was recently introduced by Representative Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence), Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-District 23, Warwick), Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick), Rep. Jean Philippe Barros (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket), and Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren).

"Housing vouchers and other public assistance programs help Rhode Island families to keep a roof over their heads, particularly as rents rise," said Rep. Williams about the bill, H. 5137. "Every one of us has needed a helping hand at some point, and folks should not face discrimination on that

[Click Here to Read the Report](#)



Examples of Source of Income Discrimination

Examples included in SouthCoast Fair Housing report “It’s About the Voucher.”

Kitchen and Bath	
Hardwood cabinets	Stove / oven
Refrigerator	Soaking tub
Lease Terms	
Tenant pays all utilities	No smoking
One year lease	No section 8

Are you a fantastic tenant? Up for grabs is a 3 bedroom in a very convenient area on the east side of Providence, next to branch ave in Providence, minutes from the I-95. It is a 2nd floor apartment with high ceilings. Open floor plan, double parlor. Nice hardwood floors. Excuse the pics, they are painting and its almost done. Please only call if you can provide proof of income and have 1st and security and a very steady source of verifiable income. UTILITIES ARE NOT INCLUDED WE do not accept vouchers of any kind cats ok.

Marketplace / Rentals

1 br · 1 ba · apartment
Pawtucket, RI · 23 minutes ago · 🌐

\$775 / Month

Apartment · Studio · Cat Friendly · Dog Friendly

Utilities: heat and hot water included!
Floor: 2nd floor
Laundry: none
Parking: Yes - 1 spot
Lease Term: 1 year
Section 8: no
Pets: Cats, Dogs, Birds, Fish welcome - breed and weight restrictions apply
NO SMOKING
Professionally Managed

REQUIREMENTS:
•1st months rent and equal security deposit

Information Pieces

Key documents were shared with constituents, partners and policymakers that summarized the SCFH's report and advocated for legislation against source of income discrimination.

Key Data from SCFH's Report



How does **source of income discrimination** affect Rhode Island?

- Tenants experience source of income discrimination **based on the type of income** they rely on—i.e., Social Security, child support, veterans benefits—despite their ability to pay.
- Most of New England already protects tenants from discrimination** against lawful source of income. Only Rhode Island and New Hampshire do not.
- Over **9,300 Rhode Island households** rely on a Housing Choice Voucher to afford safe and decent rental housing.
- Families with a voucher can afford more than a third of rental listings, **yet will ultimately be shut out of 93% of all units**, regardless of individual qualifications. These rejections reinforce patterns of poverty, homelessness, and segregation.
- Rhode Island can **increase housing opportunity** by ending income-based housing discrimination.



Read SouthCoast Fair Housing full report, *"It's About the Voucher: Source of Income Discrimination in Rhode Island"*, at <http://southcoastfairhousing.org/its-about-the-voucher/>.

SOI One-pager (2021 Version)

Ending Housing Discrimination Based on Source of Income

S561/H5257

The Problem

After waiting sometimes years to receive a rental assistance voucher, all too often tenants find that they cannot find a landlord who will rent to them, simply because of the source of their income. Some landlords on Craigslist, or other online or print services, state right in the ad, "No Section 8." In 2019, a survey conducted in Rhode Island showed that voucher holders are barred from over 80% of apartments they can afford due to source of income discrimination.

The Need

- In 2019, nearly half of all renters in RI were housing cost burdened (spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs). Nearly 80% of low-income renters were housing cost burdened.
- According to RIHousing's 2019 Rent Survey, a household would need to earn over \$65,000 per year to afford an average two-bedroom apartment in the state. However, the average renter household earns less than \$35,000.

Addressing the Need

State and federal income supports, such as rental assistance vouchers, provide critical resources to help meet the housing needs of low-income Rhode Islanders. With many of these programs, including the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), commonly known as "Section 8," the renter pays 30% of their income towards rent, and the voucher covers the balance. Rental assistance allows program participants to rent an apartment in their community of choice – increasing housing opportunities and reducing the concentration of poverty.

Approximately 9,600 RI households receive rental assistance through HCVP.

The Solution

Rhode Island should pass legislation that makes it illegal for landlords to deny tenancy solely because of one's lawful source of income. 15 states and Washington, DC, plus 99 counties and municipalities, have already made this kind of discrimination illegal, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and Vermont. Every tenant deserves to be considered by landlords based on their own qualifications as a renter, not stereotypes about the source of their income. This legislation would not apply to owner-occupied buildings with three or fewer units, and would not prevent landlords from inquiring about a tenant's income level. Ensuring that potential renters are not discriminated against based on their lawful source of income will help to meet Rhode Island's housing needs and increase housing opportunities for low-income renters at no cost to the State.

S561 Sponsors:

Senators Kallman, Quezada, Ciccone, Goodwin, Mack, Acosta, Euer, and Murray

H5257 Sponsors:

Representative Williams, Knight, Morales, Biah, Giraldo, Speakman, Henries, Potter, Barros & Batista



Postcard Outreach

Support the Source of Income Bill (S0331/H5137)

END INCOME DISCRIMINATION

Dear Legislator,

I'm asking you to support the **Source of Income Bill** (S0331/H5137); legislation that ensures tenants receiving public assistance have an equal opportunity to find housing. Rhode Island is one of only two New England states whose law allows landlords to refuse individuals and families whose rent is paid through a public subsidy, like a rental assistance program. This practice is wrong, and it's discriminatory. Every Rhode Islander deserves to be considered by a landlord based solely on their qualifications as a renter, and not stereotypes stemming from their source of income.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/Zip Code: _____

Help RI join its New England neighbors in banning income discrimination!



To:

Written Testimony

For those comfortable with sharing their stories in writing, “This is My Story” forms were used to capture stories of source of income discrimination that were shared with Senators, Representatives, and Chairs of the judiciary committee.

This is My Story Form

Source of Income Discrimination is Real

This is My Story

My name is Stephanie, and I am a participant in the RIHousing Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), which helps to pay for part of my rent. I am currently studying Medical Technology Administration at New England Tech, in addition to caring for my children.

When I signed up for the HCVP waitlist, I was homeless. I had been in an abusive relationship for seven years and was struggling to take care of my children. After years on the waiting list, I finally received notice that I was at the top of the list and going to receive a voucher. I was so excited to receive the voucher, yet the reality of finding an apartment with a voucher soon became apparent. In fact, it turned into a nightmare as I discovered that landlord after landlord wouldn't even consider me as an applicant, simply because I had a voucher. They didn't even consider any of the other merits I may have as a tenant.

I had been hoping to find an apartment in Warwick or Cranston to be closer to both my and my children's schools. However, I couldn't find a landlord in either community that would consider my tenancy. Through a family member, I did end up finding a landlord with an apartment in Providence who would rent to me.

While I'm grateful to have an apartment, it was disappointing that I could not find an apartment in the community I preferred to live in, and that so many landlords judged me simply because I had a voucher. If this legislation passes, it would mean a landlord would have to consider the ways in which I would be a good tenant, without simply disregarding me because a voucher helps pay for my rent.

Excerpt - RIHousing Testimony



February 11, 2021

Representative Raymond A. Hull
Chairman, House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Hull,

Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) is pleased to support the passage of House Bill 5257, which would prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful source of income, whether from rental assistance, social security or another source.

Households that receive public assistance, such as rental assistance through the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), commonly referred to as “Section 8,” often face discrimination in their housing search. Prospective renters who receive these vouchers are frequently denied tenancy simply because they are using rental assistance.

Currently, RIHousing administers approximately 1,500 rental assistance vouchers through the HCVP. Another 8,000 vouchers are administered by other housing authorities around the state. A landlord's refusal to accept rental assistance vouchers is a common complaint we hear from our voucher holders whether they are new to the program or moving to a new apartment. Voucher holders often wait years to receive a voucher, which can provide upward mobility, only to be unable to find a landlord who will accept it.

Often, landlords show interest in renting an apartment to a prospective tenant, but once they learn that a voucher is involved, they will tell the tenant that the apartment is no longer available, or simply say that they do not rent to voucher holders. Renters who receive rental assistance vouchers or income from sources such as social security, child support, or disability insurance should not automatically be assumed to be unacceptable or undesirable tenants, yet they often are.

A 2019 report by Southcoast Fair Housing found that 80 percent of apartments within financial reach for voucher holders are unavailable to them, as those landlords will not accept a tenant with rental assistance. This ultimately leaves many people with rental assistance unable to find an apartment to rent. Sometimes voucher holders end up returning their vouchers to the housing authority because they cannot find a landlord

Video Testimony

Signs of Providence, a media collective that focuses on social equity and digital storytelling created video clips of tenants, landlords, and others to demonstrate how source of income discrimination had affected them. **Click each video to view it online.**

Compilation of tenants and landlords



House of Hope



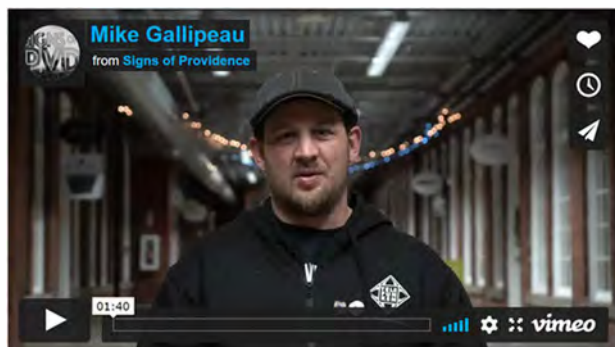
RI Commission for Human Rights



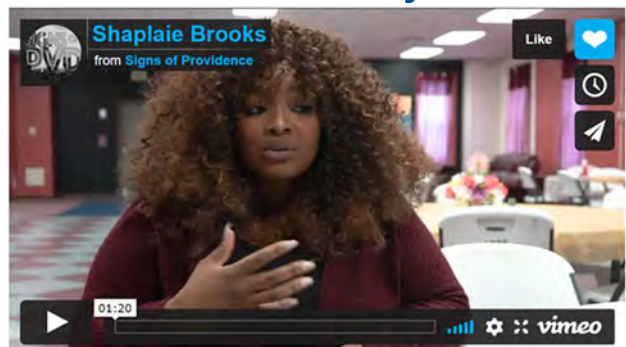
Gateways to Change



Rhode Island Social Worker



Success Story



Video Testimony (continued)

Instructions for the best way to capture personal stories via cell phone were shared with those comfortable enough to speak on video.

Instructions - English

Source of Income Discrimination Personal Video Testimony

Have you personally experienced discrimination because of a Housing Choice / Section 8 Voucher? Share your story to help us in our efforts to make this kind of discrimination illegal in the state of Rhode Island. All you have to do is **follow these 3 steps to make your voice heard.**

note: these instructions are for individuals with access to smartphones. if you do not have access to a smartphone but would like to share your story, please contact signsofprovidence@gmail.com

I. Setup

- a. Find a quiet space indoors (home, office, etc)
- b. turn on your camera with the screen and camera facing you
- c. make sure your phone is in "landscape" (HORIZONTAL)

i.



- d. press record

II. Share Your Story

Questions to answer:

- What is your name?
- Where do you live?
- How long have you had Section 8? What has it been like?
- How many landlords rejected you?
- Were you able to eventually find a home, or did you have to forfeit your voucher?

Please keep your testimony under 1 minute.

III. Share

- a. When you're finished telling your story, stop the recording.
- b. Watch your video to make sure you're comfortable and happy with it
- c. Email the video to [http://signsofprovidence@gmail.com](mailto:signsofprovidence@gmail.com), with subject: {your name} Section 8 story
- d. And that's it!

Who are we?

Signs of Providence is a media advocacy project that has been helping Rhode Islanders share their stories with legislators, stakeholders, and the general public. These videos will be used to show policy makers that housing discrimination based on source of income is a very real problem that needs to be addressed in Rhode Island. Check out some more of our work at facebook.com/signsofprovidence

Instructions - Spanish

Discriminación: Sección 8 Testimonio Personal

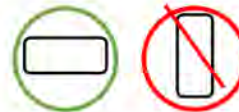
¿Ha experimentado personalmente discriminación debido a un "Voucher de elección de vivienda"/ Sección 8? Comparta su historia para ayudarnos en nuestros esfuerzos para asegurar que este tipo de discriminación sea ilegal en el estado de Rhode Island. Solo tiene que seguir estos 3 pasos para compartir su historia.

nota: estas instrucciones son para personas con acceso a smartphones. si no tiene acceso a un smartphone pero desea compartir su historia, comuníquese con <http://signsofprovidence@gmail.com>

I. Inicio

- a. Escoge un lugar silencioso (cuarto, oficina)
- b. encienda su cámara con la pantalla y la cámara hacia usted
- c. asegúrese de que su teléfono esté en "paisaje" (HORIZONTAL)

i.



- d. empieza la grabación

II. Comparte su historia

Preguntas para responder:

- ¿Cuál es su nombre?
- ¿Dónde vive?
- ¿Cuánto tiempo ha tenido la Sección 8? ¿Cómo ha sido?
- ¿Cuántos propietarios lo han rechazado?
- ¿Pudo finalmente encontrar un hogar, o tuvo que renunciar a su cupón?

Por favor, mantenga su testimonio por debajo de 1 minuto.

III. Envía el video

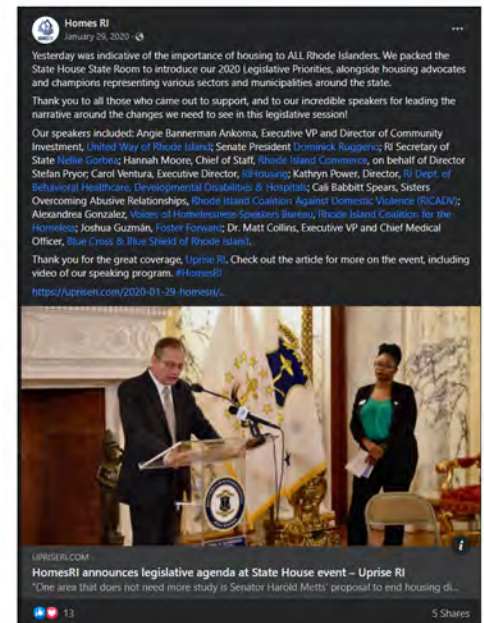
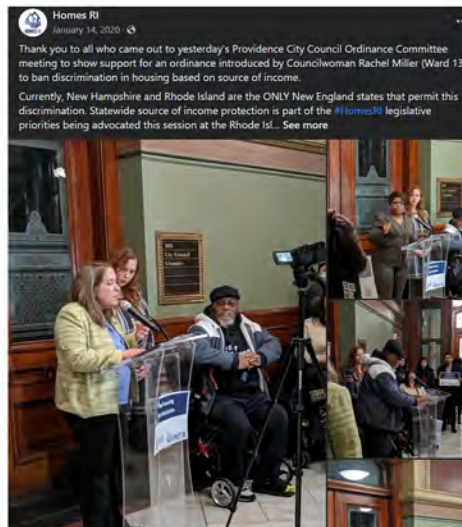
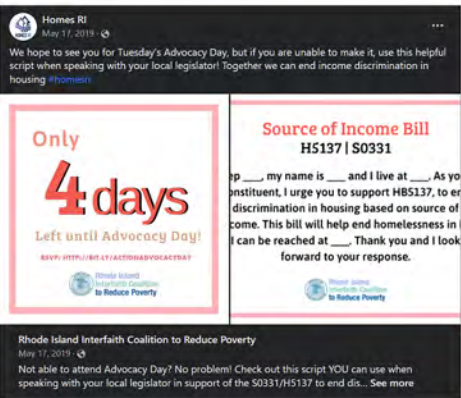
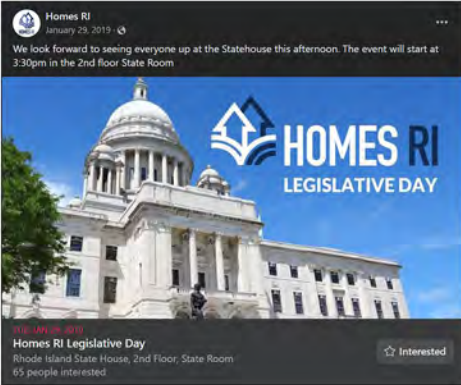
- a. Cuando hayas terminado de contar tu historia, detén la grabación
- b. Mire su video para asegurarse de que esté cómodo y contento con él.
- c. Envíe el video por correo electrónico a signsofprovidence@gmail.com, con el asunto: {su nombre} Sección 8.
- d. ¡Y ya está!

¿Quiénes Somos?

Signs of Providence es un proyecto mediático que ha estado ayudando a los habitantes de Rhode Island a compartir sus historias con legisladores, partes interesadas y el público en general. Estos videos se usarán para mostrar a los legisladores que la discriminación contra el *Housing Choice Voucher* es un verdadero problema que debe abordarse en Rhode Island. Vea más de nuestro trabajo en facebook.com/signsofprovidence

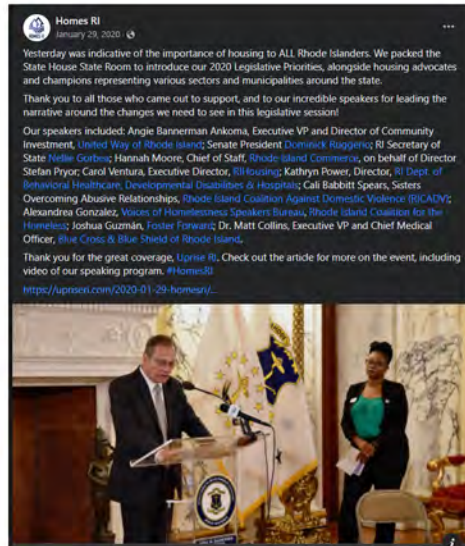
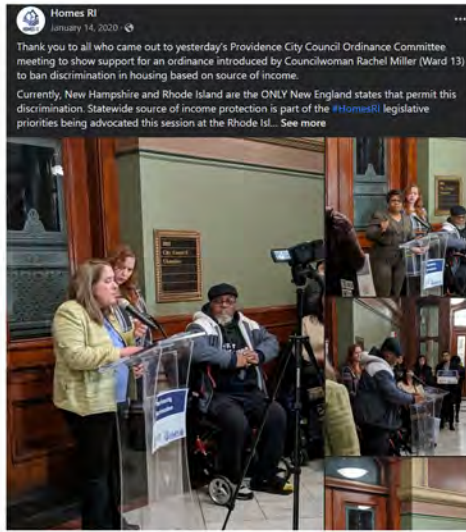
Digital Campaign

HomesRI delivered important updates and shared resources via digital channels:



Digital Campaign (continued)

HomesRI delivered important updates and shared resources via digital channels:



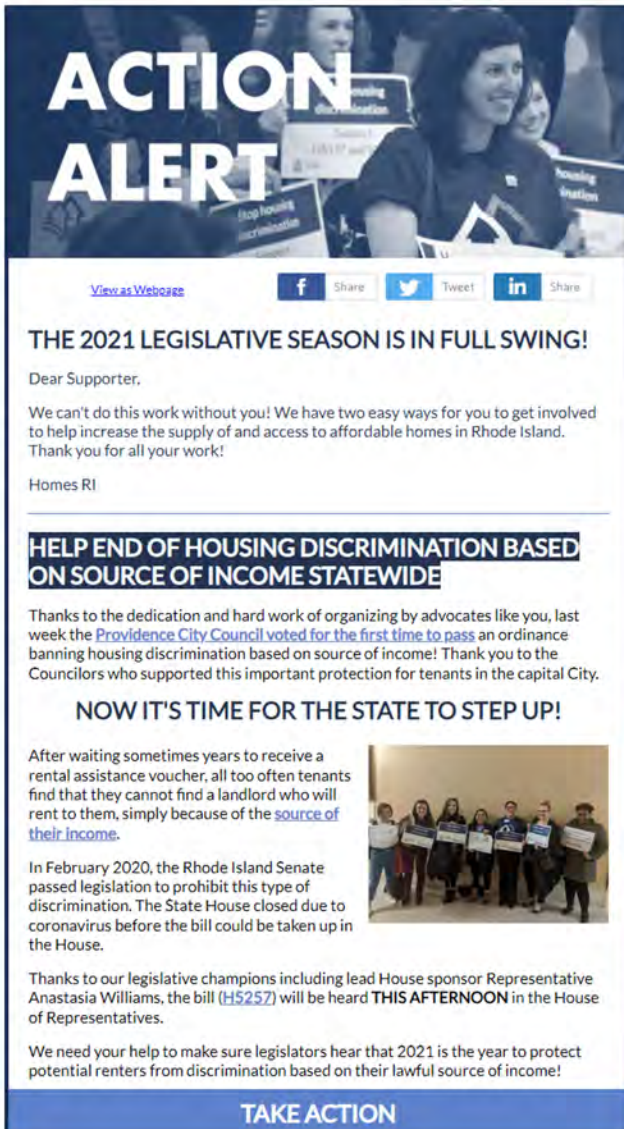
Digital Campaign (continued)

HomesRI delivered important updates and shared resources via digital channels:



Digital Campaign (continued)

HomesRI delivered important updates and shared resources via digital channels:



ACTION ALERT

Views Webpage

THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SEASON IS IN FULL SWING!

Dear Supporter,

We can't do this work without you! We have two easy ways for you to get involved to help increase the supply of and access to affordable homes in Rhode Island. Thank you for all your work!


Homes RI

HELP END OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SOURCE OF INCOME STATEWIDE

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of organizing by advocates like you, last week the [Providence City Council](#) voted for the first time to pass an ordinance banning housing discrimination based on source of income! Thank you to the Councilors who supported this important protection for tenants in the capital City.

NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE STATE TO STEP UP!

After waiting sometimes years to receive a rental assistance voucher, all too often tenants find that they cannot find a landlord who will rent to them, simply because of the [source of their income](#).



In February 2020, the Rhode Island Senate passed legislation to prohibit this type of discrimination. The State House closed due to coronavirus before the bill could be taken up in the House.

Thanks to our legislative champions including lead House sponsor Representative Anastasia Williams, the bill ([H5257](#)) will be heard **THIS AFTERNOON** in the House of Representatives.

We need your help to make sure legislators hear that 2021 is the year to protect potential renters from discrimination based on their lawful source of income!

TAKE ACTION



THANK YOU!

A HISTORIC VOTE!

After both chambers of RI's General Assembly voted to end housing discrimination based on lawful source of income, Governor Dan McKee signed the Fair Housing Practices Act! This moment would not be possible without you, the advocates that stayed true to this cause for years. When advocates work together and support each other, we win.

Homes RI would like to take this time to thank the sponsors of the bills (2021-H 5257 and 2021-S 0561)—especially Chairwoman Anastasia Williams, Senator Meghan Kallman, and former Senator Harold Metts!

HOUSE SPONSORS	SENATE SPONSORS
Anastasia P. Williams Jason Knight David Morales Nathan Blah Joshua Giraldo June Speakman Brianna Henriess Brandon Potter Jean Philippe Barros Jose f. Batista	Meghan Kallman Ana Quezada Frank Ciccone Maryellen Goodwin Tiara Mack Jonathon Acosta Dawn Euer Melissa Murray

If you have a moment, please send your State Representative and State Senator who voted in support a quick thank you!

Dear _____,

Thank you for voting to end housing discrimination based on lawful source of income. It is a crucial addition to our fair housing laws. I look forward to continue working with you to ensure that everyone in Rhode Island has a safe, healthy and affordable home.

Many thanks,

FIND YOUR ELECTEDS

Homes RI is a collaborative effort of local nonprofits, housing organizations, and community stakeholders, created to shine a spotlight on the need for increased investments in community development and affordable homes across Rhode Island.

Homes RI is managed by the Housing Network of Rhode Island.

For questions about Homes RI, contact [Katie West](#).

Homes RI | www.homesri.org | info@homesri.org

Press and Media Coverage

Fair Housing Act is signed into law

McKee signs Fair Housing Practices Act that aims to curb discrimination based on income

by NBC 10 NEWS | Thursday, April 15th 2021



VIEW ALL PHOTOS

Providence passes SOI ordinance

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) — The Providence City Council on Thursday passed an ordinance prohibiting landlords from discriminating against renters based on their lawful source of income. The legislation, which still requires a second passage, would bar landlords in Providence from

Advocacy at a Providence City Council meeting

Panel urged: Ban housing bias due to income source

Proposed ordinance in Providence grows from four years of bills dying in R.I. House

Madeleine List mlist@providencejournal.com

Published 9:11 p.m. ET Jan. 13, 2020 | Updated 9:11 p.m. ET Jan. 13, 2020

View Comments



Coverage of "It's About the Voucher"

A new report from SouthCoast Fair Housing entitled "It's About the Voucher" finds that "source of income discrimination imposes steep barriers to renting for low-income Rhode Islanders who rely on the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. With a voucher, participating tenants should be able to afford roughly 34 percent of the apartments advertised online each day around the state. In

Op-Ed in the Newport Daily News

End Source of Income Discrimination in R.I.

Rhonda R. Mitchell

Published 5:36 p.m. ET April 29, 2019 | Updated 5:36 p.m. ET April 29, 2019



April is National Fair Housing Month, so there is no better time to reflect on the challenges too many Rhode Islanders still face to access a safe, decent home they can afford.

Fifty-two percent of Newport renters are housing cost burdened meaning they pay more than 30% of their income toward rent and utilities. The average two bedroom rent in Newport is \$1,753 per month and in order to afford this rent a household needs to earn \$70,120. Full-time working families earning the R.I. minimum wage earn just under \$20,000 annually.

Housing options limited locally for Section 8 holders

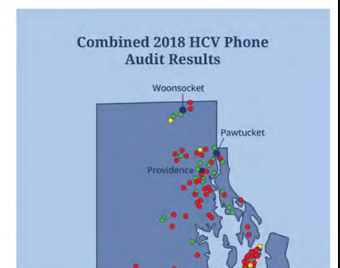
Derek Gomes Gomes@NewportRI.com

Published 3:03 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2019 | Updated 3:12 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2019



A recent report by a regional housing nonprofit highlighted the obstacles individuals with housing vouchers face when trying to find a place to live.

SouthCoast Fair Housing, which serves Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, scoured for available rental units during two audit periods last February and November.





Press and Media Coverage

What's Up Newp (Apr. 2021): Governor McKee signs Fair House Practices Act

WJAR (Apr. 2021): McKee signs Fair Housing Practices Act that aims to curb discrimination based on income

Motif Magazine (Mar. 2021): A Roof at Any Cost

WPRI (Feb 2021): Providence councilors vote to protect housing voucher recipients

The Providence Journal (Jan. 2020): Panel Urged: Ban housing bias due to source of income discrimination

Uprise RI (Jan. 2020): HomesRI announces legislative agenda at State House event

Patch.com (June 2019): Rhode Island Senate Approves Bill Banning Housing Discrimination

Newport Daily News (Apr. 2019): End Source of Income Discrimination in R.I.

Brown Political Review (Apr. 2019): Turning Tenants Away: How Source of Income Discrimination Legalizes Prejudice

997 WPRO (Mar. 2019): Providence leaders press housing discrimination ban

Uprise RI (Feb. 2019): New report documents the effects of source of income discrimination in housing

NLIHC (Feb. 2019): Fact of the Week: Most Rhode Island Landlords are Unwilling to Rent to Housing Voucher Holders, Especially in the Suburbs

Affordable Housing Finance (Feb. 2019): Study Finds Discrimination Against Voucher Holders

Brown Daily Herald (Feb. 2019): Report shows discrimination against housing voucher recipients

Newport Daily News (Feb. 2019): Housing options limited locally for Section 8 holders

The Providence Journal (Jan. 2019): Bills would bar bias against low-income renters

The Providence Journal (Mar. 2018): Bill seeks to end Section 8 stigma

After the Bill is Passed

It is entirely fitting that the bill was signed into law in April, National Fair Housing Month. Before the month was over, coalition member the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights held a Facebook live event that explained the changes to law made by the bill and answered questions about the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants in implementing it.

An information sheet in English and Spanish was created and circulated through PHAs and other coalition members explaining the new law and landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities. Several cases involving enforcement of the new law have already been brought forward.



Signs of Possible Source of Income Discrimination

- You see an advertisement that says "No Section 8" for an apartment.
- A housing provider refuses to accept your housing voucher because it requires them to have their unit inspected.
- You are told the unit is no longer available after you explain that your income/benefits include a lawful source of income.

FAIR HOUSING PRACTICES ACT

Rhode Island's Source of Income Protections

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing-related transactions because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or familial status (presence of minor children or pregnancy). Additionally, HUD now administers and enforces the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Rhode Island's fair housing law also prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of: age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, veteran or military status, status as a victim of domestic violence, and now, source of income. Source of income discrimination is when a person seeking housing is discriminated against on the basis of the source of income they will be relying on to pay for their housing costs. For example, if a potential tenant reports that they have income from a federal program such as Social Security, or a housing subsidy, they cannot be excluded on that basis or treated differently than others.

This information sheet is intended to answer some frequently asked questions about source of income discrimination and what its addition to Rhode Island's Fair Housing law means for renters and landlords. This overview is for informational purposes only. Please consult an attorney for legal questions about what constitutes source of income discrimination or any violation of federal or state fair housing laws.

What is a lawful source of income?

A lawful source of income is any income or subsidy from child support, alimony, social security, supplemental security income, or any other federal, state or local public assistance program including veterans' assistance and housing vouchers.

What actions do fair housing laws prohibit?

Fair housing laws prohibit actions such as denying housing, limiting access to housing, discouraging homeseekers, making or publishing discriminatory statements, or creating different terms, conditions, rules, fees or standards because of one's membership in a protected class.

What is a housing voucher?

A housing voucher represents a direct payment from the voucher administrator to the landlord for all or a portion of the tenant's rent. The tenant then pays the landlord the difference between the actual rent and the amount paid by the voucher program. Housing vouchers are generally administered by local public housing authorities or regional housing agencies. Different rules may apply to various housing voucher programs.

Are both homeowners and renters protected from source of income discrimination?

Rhode Island's source of income discrimination protections apply to both homebuyers and renters.

Who to Contact

If you feel you may have been discriminated against, please contact the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights:

Phone: 401-222-2661

180 Westminster Street,
3rd Floor

Providence, RI 02903

Website: <http://www.richr.ri.gov/filecharge/index.php>

Email: RICHr.housing@richr.ri.gov

For other information about your fair housing rights

SouthCoast Fair Housing
1005 Main Street, Suite 1210
(second floor)
Pawtucket, RI 02860
Phone: (401) 285-2550
<http://southcoastfairhousing.org/>

Rhode Island Legal Services Providence
56 Pine Street, Fourth Floor
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 274-2652
(800) 662-5034

Newport
50 Washington Square
Newport, RI 02840
(401) 846-2264
(800) 637-4529

RI Center for Justice
1 Empire Plaza, Suite 410
Providence, RI 02903
401-491-1101
<https://centerforjustice.org/contact/>

What kind of requirements for tenant eligibility would probably be considered discriminatory on the basis of source of income?

Any requirement that would treat a tenant with a lawful source of income differently from other tenants could be considered discriminatory. Examples might include not accepting applications from tenants with certain sources of income or putting requirements on those tenants that are different from the requirements a landlord places on other tenants. Rejecting tenants based on their housing voucher or their receipt of SSI benefits, or requiring a criminal history check only for voucher holders for example would be violations.

What kinds of statements or requirements in an advertisement for an apartment might be considered discriminatory on the basis of source of income?

Requirements that treat tenants with a lawful source of income differently from other tenants could be considered discriminatory. This includes statements such as "No Section 8" and requirements such as a larger security deposit based on type of income.

Are landlords allowed to set minimum income limits for tenants using housing vouchers?

Landlords can set minimum income limit for tenants, but they must take into consideration the value of the subsidy provided by the voucher when determining whether an applicant can afford the rent. For example, if a landlord wants a tenant to demonstrate monthly income that is twice the amount of the rent, they should compare the tenants income to only the tenant's share of monthly rent, not the total rent including the part paid by the housing voucher.

If an applicant for an apartment has a housing voucher, can a landlord avoid renting to them by refusing to follow program requirements, such as having the apartment inspected?

Rhode Island's fair housing law specifically includes the requirements associated with public assistance, rental assistance or housing subsidy programs in the definition of lawful source of income. Refusing to agree to the program requirements like inspection could be considered discriminatory.

Can a landlord refuse to rent to, or evict a tenant with a lawful source of income?

A housing provider has the right to refuse rental applications or evict tenants based on non-discriminatory criteria, such as a tenant's rental history or ability to afford the rent (when taking into account all of an applicant's income or benefits). As a best practice, a housing provider should establish qualification standards, share them with anyone who applies, and apply them equally to each household.

Does a landlord have to lower the rent on their apartment if an applicant has a housing voucher and the cost of rent exceeds what they are allowed to pay for rent?

No, as long as the same rent is consistently required for all applicants regardless of source of income.

Are all apartments covered by source of income discrimination protections?

Only properties with three or fewer units, one of which is occupied by the owner, are exempt from source of income discrimination protections.

When do source of income discrimination protections go into effect?

Source of income discrimination protections went into effect on April 15, 2021.