



Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan

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Good morning committee members. My name is Niki Green, I'm the Coordinator of Investigations and Legal Research at the Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan. I am here today on our organization's behalf to support House Bills 4062 and 4063 as introduced.

The Fair Housing Center is a non-profit civil rights organization that investigates complaints of housing discrimination. We take over 200 complaints per year across our 10-county service area, which has a population of 1.6 million people. We have been receiving source of income discrimination complaints for over 30 years.

Source of income discrimination is a prevalent, real-world problem for many renters in Michigan. Source of income discrimination is now the third most common complaint we receive at the Fair Housing Center.

Many voucher recipients in our state are on a waiting list for years before they receive housing assistance, and even after they receive a voucher they are frequently unable to place their vouchers because landlords refuse to accept them. Of the over 200 complaints filed with our office in the last year, 16% alleged discrimination based on income source.

According to Rent.com, out of all the states, Michigan had the 3rd highest increases in rent prices in the last year, with a 12.47% January to January increase. Finding affordable housing is hard enough, but what happens to voucher holders and their families? Often times, they become homeless. Source of income discrimination increases homelessness, concentrates poverty into substandard housing, and perpetuates residential racial segregation - all outcomes that no one wants for Michigan.

Banning source of income discrimination will also alleviate discrimination based on race, sex, children, and disability as a disproportionate number of voucher holders are Black, are solo mothers with children, and are people with disabilities.

Studies have found that communities without source-of-income protections are far more likely to turn away voucher holders, while the cities and states with income protections help more people remain housed, an outcome that supports not only tenants but also landlords.

In Michigan there are only 10 cities with local ordinances protecting residents against source of income discrimination. Although the Fair Housing Center has successfully advocated for residents using local ordinances, many people are not aware of these protections.

Local ordinances only provide protections for a small fraction of Michiganders, but adding source of income protection to the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act would not only increase people's awareness of the issue, but it would also guarantee that thousands more people in our state would be shielded from discrimination.

The people of Michigan need robust and effective state legislation to protect constituents across the state from source of income discrimination. Passing these House Bills would be a major step toward ensuring that our state's most vulnerable citizens remain housed.