

**CHAPTER 2021-2**

No. 74     **AN ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER 16, “OFFENSES AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISION”, ARTICLE II, ENTITLED: “DISCRIMINATION”, OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE, BY AMENDING SECTIONS 16-54, "DEFINITION OF TERMS," 16-55, "UNLAWFUL HOUSING PRACTICES," 16-63, "FUNCTION AND DUTIES OF COMMISSION," 16-64, "POWERS OF COMMISSION," AND 16-65, "CERTIFICATION OF BONA FIDE QUALIFICATIONS"**

**Approved February 26, 2021**

*Be it ordained by the City of Providence:*

Section 1. Chapter 16, “Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions,” Article II, “Discrimination,” Section 54, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-54. - Definition of terms.

*Bona fide qualifications* refers to a valid consideration of race and color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, disability, age or country of ancestral origin which has been certified as such by the commission or by the Rhode Island Commission on Human Rights.

*Charge* is that which is brought by a complainant alleging an unlawful practice or that which is filed by the commission following an investigation.

*Commission* means the Providence Human Relations Commission, its agents and employees.

*Complaint* means that which is issued by the commission on its own behalf or in the behalf of the complainant and subsequent to a probable cause determination.

*Disability* means any condition or characteristic whether physical or mental which renders a person disabled as defined by 42 USC 1202(2), commonly referred to as the “Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990”, as amended.

*Discounts* means any reduction of the normal charge for products or services. Includes those offered on a free basis.

*Discrimination* includes any policy or practice which by design or effect segregates, separates or has a disproportionate impact according to race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income or because of the race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income of any person with whom they are or may wish to be associated.

*Employment agency* includes any person undertaking with or without compensation to procure opportunities to work, or to procure, recruit, refer, or place employees.

*Employee* does not include any person employed by his or her parents, spouse or child.

*Employer* includes the city and all its departments and authorities, and all persons employing seven (7) or more individuals within the City of Providence, or any person acting as the agent of an employer either directly or indirectly. The term does not apply to a religious corporation, religious association, religious educational institution, or religious society with respect to the employment of individuals of its religion to perform work connected with the carrying on of its religious activities.

*Educational facilities* means any public or private institution of learning.

*Gender identity or expression* means a person's actual or perceived gender, as well as a person's gender identity, gender-related self-image, gender-related appearance, or gender-related expression; whether or not that gender identity, gender-related self-image, gender-related appearance, or gender-related expression is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth.

*Housing accommodation* includes any building or structure or portion thereof, or any parcel of land, developed or undeveloped, which is occupied, or intended, designed, or arranged to be occupied, or to be developed for occupancy, as the home, residence, or commercial business of one (1) or more persons, but excludes any dwelling unit which, under the provisions of state fair housing laws, are exempt by virtue of their location in an owner-occupied building.

*Labor organization* includes any organization which exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of collective bargaining or of dealing with employers concerning grievances, terms or conditions of employment, or of other mutual aid or protection in relation to employment.

*Lawful source of income* refers to any income or earnings including income, benefit, or subsidy derived from child support; alimony; Social Security; Supplemental Security Income; and other federal, state, or local public assistance program, including but not limited to medical or veterans assistance; any federal, state, or local rental assistance or housing subsidy program, including the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program authorized by 42 U.S.C. §1437; and any requirement associated with such public assistance, rental assistance, or housing subsidy program.

*Public accommodation* refers to any public resort, accommodation, assemblage, amusement, business, or establishment that provides a service or function, personal, or otherwise licensed, or unlicensed, including but not limited to inns, taverns, bars, roadhouses, hotels, motels, trailer parks, camp sites, restaurants, diners, or any place where food or beverage is sold, retail stores and establishments, dispensaries, clinics, hospitals, rest homes, nursing homes, rest rooms, bathhouses, barber shops, beauty parlors, trade schools or vocational establishments, theaters, motion picture houses, music halls, race courses, skating rinks, amusement and recreation parks, fairs, bowling alleys, golf courses, gymnasiums, shooting galleries, billiard and pool parlors, swimming pools, athletic or recreational facilities, seashore accommodations, public libraries, garages, all public conveyances operated on land, water, in the air or underground, as well as the stations and terminals thereof, public halls and rooms and public stairs and elevators of buildings or other public accommodations, public housing projects, clubs, societies, fraternities, sororities, associations, or other organizations that are public or quasi-public, banks, finance companies, insurance companies, building and construction companies, other businesses; traffic and other courts, and licensing and regulating bodies and all public policies, programs, and activities. Nothing herein contained shall be construed to include, or apply to, any place of accommodation which is by its nature distinctly private; provided, that where public use is permitted, that use shall be covered by this article.

*Sexual discrimination* shall be deemed to include situations where an individual, acting independently, is discriminated against because of gender.

Section 2. Chapter 16, "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions," Article II, "Discrimination," Section 55, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-55. - Unlawful housing practices.

(a) It shall be an unlawful housing practice:

- (1) For any owner, lessee, sub-lessee, assignee, managing agent, real estate agent, or other person having the right to sell, rent, lease, or manage a housing accommodation or an agent of any of those:
  - A. To discriminate or directly or indirectly make or cause to be made any written or oral inquiry concerning race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin of any prospective purchaser, occupant, or tenant of such housing accommodation;

- B. To discriminate or directly or indirectly to refuse to sell, rent, lease, let or otherwise deny to or withhold from any individual, such housing accommodation because of the race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income of such individual;
  - C. To discriminate or directly or indirectly print or publish or cause to be printed or published, circulated, broadcasted, issued, used, displayed, posted, or mailed any written, printed or painted or oral communication, notice or advertisement relating to the sale, rental, lease or let of such housing accommodation which indicates any preference, denial, limitation, specification, qualification, or discrimination, based upon race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income;
  - D. To directly or indirectly discriminate against any person because of his or her race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income in the terms, conditions, or privileges of the sale, rental, lease, or let of any such housing accommodation or in the furnishing of facilities or services in connection therewith.
- (2) For any person to whom application is made for a loan or other form of financial assistance for the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, repair or maintenance of any housing accommodation, whether secured or unsecured:
- A. To discriminate or to directly or indirectly make or cause to be made any written or oral inquiry concerning the race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin of any individual seeking such financial assistance, or of existing or prospective occupants or tenants of such housing accommodation, nor shall any such person to whom such application is made, directly or indirectly discriminate in the terms, conditions or privileges relating to the obtaining or use of any such financial assistance against any applicant because of race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age or country of ancestral origin of such applicant, or of the existing or prospective occupants or tenants thereof;
  - B. To discriminate or to directly or indirectly deny or limit such application for financial assistance on the basis of an appraiser's, whether independent or not, evaluation of the property or neighborhood under consideration, when such evaluation is based on discriminatory criteria.
- (3) For any person, agent, firm, corporation or association, whether or not acting for monetary gain, to directly or indirectly induce, attempt to induce, prevent or attempt to prevent the sale, purchase, rental, or letting of any housing accommodation by:
- A. Implicit or explicit representations regarding the existing or potential proximity of real property owned, used, or occupied by persons of any particular race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income;
  - B. Implicit or explicit representations regarding the effects or consequences of any such existing or potential proximity, including but not limited to the lowering of property values, an increase in criminal or antisocial behavior, or a decline in the quality of schools or other facilities;
  - C. Implicit or explicit false representations regarding the availability of suitable housing within a particular neighborhood or area, or failure to disclose or offer to show all properties listed or held for sale, rent, lease, or let within a requested price range, regardless of location, so as to promote the continuance or maintenance of segregated housing or so to retard, obstruct, or discourage integrated housing on or in any street, block, or neighborhood.
- (4) Except where based on a valid affirmative action program or recordkeeping or reporting requirements:

- A. For any person, agent, manager, owner, or developer of any apartment or housing unit, complex, or development, whether commercial or residential to directly or indirectly make or keep a record of any applicant's, prospective tenant's, or tenant's race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin;
  - B. To use any form of housing or loan application which contain questions or entries directly or indirectly pertaining to race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin;
  - C. Establish, announce, or follow a pattern, practice, or policy of denying, excluding or limiting by any means whatsoever housing accommodations to any group because of the race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or lawful source of income of such group.
- (5) For any person to discriminate in any manner against any individual, or deny that individual because he or she has opposed any practice forbidden by this article, or because he or she has made a charge, testified, or assisted in any manner in any investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this article;
- (6) For any person, whether or not acting for monetary gain, to aid, abet, incite, compel or coerce the doing of any act declared by this section to be unlawful housing practice, or to obstruct or prevent any person from complying with the provisions of this article or any regulations or issued thereunder, or to attempt directly or indirectly to commit any act declared by this section to be an unlawful housing practice;
- (b) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to:
- (1) prevent the operation or establishment of housing facilities designed for the exclusive use of the aged or elderly and/or disabled, nor to prohibit the establishment of programs assigned to meet the needs of circumstances of handicapped disabled persons; or
  - (2) prohibit any oral or written inquiry as to whether the prospective tenant is eighteen (18) years of age or older; or
  - (3) confirm the source, amount and expected duration of the lawful source of income of a prospective purchaser or tenant; or
  - (4) prohibit an owner of a housing accommodation from refusing to rent to a person based on their lawful source of income if the housing accommodation is three (3) units or less, one of which is occupied by the owner.
- (c) If an owner, lessee, sub-lessee, assignee, managing agent, real estate agent, or other person having the right to sell, rent, lease, or manage a housing accommodation or an agent of any of those requires that a prospective or current tenant have a certain minimum level of income, the standard for assessing eligibility shall be based only on the portion of the rent to be paid by the tenant, taking into account the value of any lawful source of income.
- (d) Private Enforcement Actions:
- (1) An individual aggrieved by an unlawful housing practice in violation of this chapter may bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction for appropriate relief.
  - (2) As used in subsection (1), "appropriate relief" means damages for injury or loss caused by each violation of this chapter, including, but not limited to permanent or temporary injunction, punitive damages, costs, reasonable attorney fees, and the types of relief described in section 16-76.
  - (3) Any action taken by the City or Commission does not preclude any private individual from seeking a private right of action under this section.

Section 3. Chapter 16, "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions," Article II, "Discrimination," Section 63, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-63. - Function and duties of commission.

- (a) The commission shall act in a policy and advisory capacity, and its functions and duties shall be to further amicable relations among various segments of the population which together comprise the City of Providence; to help make it possible for each citizen, regardless of race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or other bases of discrimination prohibited by ordinance, to develop talents and abilities without limitation, to aid in permitting the community to benefit from the fullest realization of its human resources, and to preserve and further the good name of Providence and its people for tolerance and fair play, and promote better relations among all people.
- (b) In order to accomplish the objectives herein set out, the commission shall advise the mayor, city council and other offices of the city on problems affecting human and intergroup relations; make studies, surveys and investigations to provide accurate information and data for orderly and constructive community development, and to recommend such measures as are deemed necessary to carry out the objectives for which the commission has been created; consult with, obtain cooperation and coordinated effort on the part of all agencies, both public and private, which function in the field of human relations, including schools, law enforcement agencies, welfare, youth, and other similar organizations; utilize the resources of individuals and groups toward the improvement of inter group relations, to combat those misconceptions and prejudices which set group against group, and to eliminate discriminatory practices and policies.

Section 4. Chapter 16, "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions," Article II, "Discrimination," Section 64, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-64. - Powers of commission.

The commission is hereby empowered:

- (1) To provide for execution within its jurisdiction of the policies embodied in this article;
- (2) To safeguard all individuals within its jurisdiction from discrimination because of race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or other bases of discrimination prohibited by ordinance;
- (3) To receive, initiate, investigate, hear and determine charges of violations of the provisions of this article forbidding discrimination;
- (4) Compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence relevant to the matter in question for investigatory and determinative purposes by subpoena issued by the city council upon request in writing by said commission, and obtain enforcement of said subpoena in superior court;
- (5) Issue remedial orders after notice and hearing, requiring cessation of violations;
- (6) Employ an executive director, hearing examiners, clerks, agents and employees;
- (7) Accept grants, gifts or bequests, public or private, to help finance its activities;
- (8) Enter into deferral [referral] or other cooperative working agreements with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission created by Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with the Rhode Island Commission on Human Rights, and with any federal or state agency in order to achieve the purposes of this article;
- (9) To enact by majority vote of its members such rules and regulations as it may deem necessary and in the public interest to carry out the terms and conditions set out in this article. Such rules and regulations shall be signed by the chairperson of the commission and attested to by the executive director, and a copy shall be filed with the city clerk;
- (10) To elect a chairperson and other officers, and establish committees and advisory councils as it shall deem appropriate for the purposes of this article;
- (11) To render each year to the mayor and city council a full written report of all its activities and of its recommendations.

Section 5. Chapter 16, "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions," Article II, "Discrimination," Section 65, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-65. - Certification of bona fide qualification.

Upon the filing of a petition by any interested person, the commission may determine whether a bona fide qualification should be certified for any position, housing, or public accommodation, credit or loan eligibility or education practice based on race or color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or other bases of discrimination prohibited by ordinance.

Section 6. Chapter 16, "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions," Article II, "Discrimination," Section 76, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 16-76. - Order and Compliance .

(a) If upon all the testimony taken, the commission shall determine that the respondent has engaged in or is engaging in unlawful practices, the commission shall issue and cause to be served upon such respondent an order requiring such respondent to cease and desist from such unlawful practices, and to take such further affirmative and other action as will effectuate the purposes of this article, including compliance reports; provided only, that any such order establishing remedial ratios shall be limited in time and scope to that which is required to eliminate or correct the effects of practices forbidden by this article, and that in no case shall the commission require the employment of a person or persons not otherwise qualified. The commission in its discretion may award the complainant for:

- (1) All damages sustained as a result of the unlawful act, including damages sustained through pain, humiliation and mental suffering;
- (2) Payment of cost, including all reasonable attorney fees incurred at any time as a result of the unlawful act;
- (3) Punitive damages;
- (4) Other specific or equitable relief, such as access to the dwelling at issue (or a comparable dwelling); and
- (5) Any other provisions to vindicate the public interest, including apologies; educational and training efforts; and affirmative activities to remediate past discriminatory practices, or prevent future ones.

(b) Upon submission of the reports of compliance the commission, if satisfied therewith, may issue a finding that the respondent has ceased to engage in unlawful practices.

Section 7. This ordinance shall take effect six (6) months after passage.

IN CITY COUNCIL  
FEB 4 2021  
FIRST READING  
READ AND PASSED

*Shawn Belcher* CLERK

IN CITY  
COUNCIL  
FEB 18 2021  
FIRST READING  
READ AND PASSED

*Sabrina Mats*  
PRESIDENT  
*Shawn Belcher*  
CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.

*[Signature]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor  
Date: *2/26/21*

## SECTION 8 UNIT DISTRIBUTION

### SECTION 8 DISTRIBUTION BY NEIGHBORHOOD INCLUDING PORT INS WITHOUT SITE BASED

Neighborhood	Number Of Units	Percent
Blackstone	0	0
College Hill	6	< 1
Charles	99	4.3
Downtown	2	< 1
Elmhurst	54	2.3
Elmwood	217	9.4
Federal Hill	26	1.1
Fox Point	0	1.8
Hartford	41	< 1
Hope	3	< 1
Lower South Providence	169	7.3
Manton	68	2.9
Mt. Hope	44	1.9
Mt. Pleasant	126	5.5
Olneyville	139	6.0
Reservoir	28	1.2
So. Elmwood	25	1.1
Smith Hill	115	5.0
Silver Lake	132	5.7
Upper South Providence	208	9.0
Valley	57	2.5
Wanskuk	190	8.2
Washington Park	100	4.3
Wayland	0	0
West End	209	9.0
Other (Outside City)	245	10.6
<b>Total Section 8 units</b>	<b>2,303</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Memo**

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Peter Asen, Director of Strategy and Development, Providence Housing Authority  
**DATE:** June 4, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Factors Limiting Housing Choice Survey

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The following is a summary of the key results of the recently administered survey of Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher participants concerning their experiences in leasing a new unit. PHA received 52 survey responses by asking participants to complete the one-page survey in English or Spanish when coming into the office as a new voucher holder or existing recipient who was processing a move. It is important to note that not all respondents provided answers to all seven questions.

**The survey underlines the challenges many of our voucher-holders face in terms of landlord unwillingness to rent to them. Sixty one percent said explicitly that a landlord did not rent to them because of their voucher.**

**Question: How long did it take you to rent a home once you began looking?**

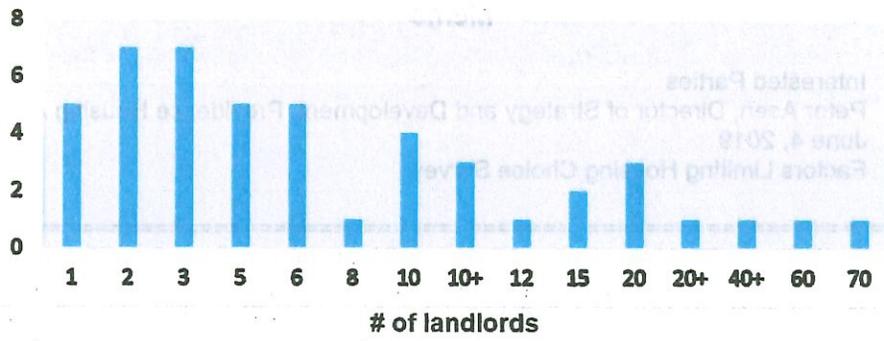
Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that it took them less than 60 days to rent a home once they began looking for a unit; 33% reported it took more than 90 days. Four percent of survey participants (2 people) reported that they looked but did not end up moving. The chart below depicts the survey results for this question. It is important to note that if a voucher holder must find a unit within 120 days or they may lose their voucher.



**Question: How many landlords did you contact before you were able to find a home to rent?**

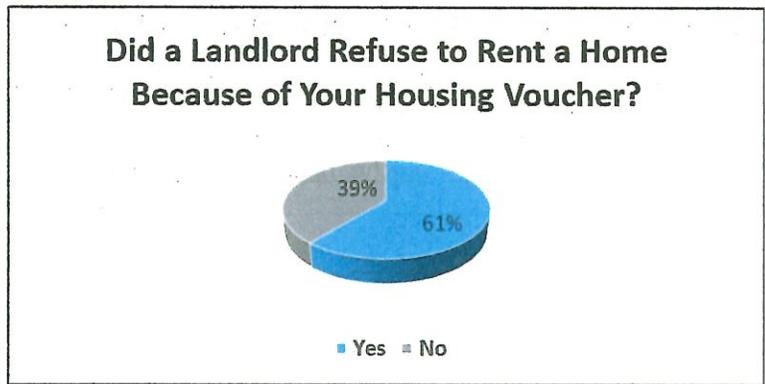
Forty-five respondents answered this question; responses ranged from a low of contacting one landlord (five participants reporting) to a high of 70 landlords (one respondent) contacted during the search. Of those who responded, 38 percent (17 of 45) reported contacting ten landlords or more.

### Number of Landlords Contacted by Participants Seeking a New Home



**Question: Did any landlord not rent you a home because of your housing voucher?**

The chart below shows that a majority of respondents to this survey reported having a landlord not rent to them because of their having a voucher.



December 30, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter to talk about my experience after the fire that happened January 6, 2018 at Bowdoin St. in Providence and finding a place that would accept the section 8 program. Multiple families lost everything, even a person who lost their life due to the neglect of a landlord of the house next door that just didn't want to fix anything on his property- the fire spread to three houses in total. It has been about a year and 2 months since we all lost everything in that fire.

As for my family and me, it was very hard to find an apartment or a house even with the help of my landlord. At the time he didn't have any other apartments available to rent to me, but he never gave up helping me find one.

Even with many people helping me, including my daughter and many friends, it took me three months to find an apartment. All I was getting from every landlord that we reached was that they didn't accept section 8 or did not allow any dogs. Some didn't mention Section 8 in their ad but when I asked, they said no. Some said they did but then changed their minds. Some set the price too high for a 3 bedroom or said that I needed to be making the double or triple the amount of the rent monthly.

At this point I wanted to give up emotionally, physically and mentally, I was drained. My youngest daughter had gotten surgery on her right knee, it was snowing like crazy, I had to separate from my kids because there was not enough room for all of them to stay with me in one place. I wish some of these landlords would really think about this rent being guaranteed every month.

In advance, I appreciate it very much you taking the time to read my letter. Thank you so much.

Sincerely yours,

*Cecil Vega*

Cecil Vega  
Providence



**Rhode Island Coalition  
for the Homeless**

1070 Main St, Suite 304, Pawtucket, RI 02860  
[www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org) (401) 721-5685

13 January 2020

Chairperson Ryan and members of the Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances,

Housing discrimination plays an ugly yet pivotal role in perpetuating homelessness. It creates another barrier to Rhode Islanders trying to find a safe, secure, affordable home. Taking meaningful steps to remove barriers to housing means taking meaningful steps to end homelessness in RI. The RI Coalition for the Homeless proudly supports Councilwoman Miller's proposed ordinance to ban discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful income.

A renter in RI must earn over \$58,000 per year (over \$70,000 per year in Providence) to comfortably afford a 2-bedroom apartment. That means transitioning from homelessness to housing would be impossible for virtually all Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness, without federal and/or state income supports. It may take years for a household to receive their subsidy and some subsidies have a built-in expiration date. If an individual/family does not find an apartment (read: does not find a landlord willing to accept the voucher), they risk losing their subsidy and thus their means to pay.

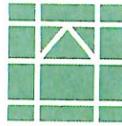
SOI discrimination often provides an "acceptable" face for other forms of discrimination. Stereotypes abound regarding the "type" of person receiving income assistance. Discrimination exacerbates inequity and causes even further damage to marginalized communities. Most minority groups experience homelessness at higher rates than whites. For example, African-Americans comprise 14% of the general population, yet 40% of Americans experiencing homelessness. Reliance on stereotypes ensures that Rhode Islanders receiving income supports remain mired in hardship and homelessness.

On any given night, 1,055 Rhode Islanders will experience homelessness. If we do not address root causes, such as systemic racism and housing affordability, and if we cut off lawful paths for Rhode Islanders to obtain housing, this number will continue to rise. Please vote to pass this bill out of committee and to the full Council with your strong support.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Frumerie  
Executive Director

H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K

January 13, 2020

Councilwoman Jo-Ann Ryan, Chair  
Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council  
25 Dorrance Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of Proposed City Ordinance 23686

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies and the low income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in support of City Ordinance 23686, proposed legislation that seeks to provide protection to households from housing discrimination based on their lawful source of income, such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income.

If enacted, the proposed ordinance would provide low-income tenants greater access to housing options in the City of Providence. More specifically the proposed ordinance would increase access to higher quality rental homes and expand neighborhood choice. Given the ongoing and persistent shortage of affordable housing options in Rhode Island, creating laws that expand access to housing choice, particularly among our most vulnerable populations, is a good thing – for renters, for landlords, for neighborhoods, and for the City. Many low income families, who pay part or all of their rent from state and federal housing assistance, social security, social security disability, child support or any other lawful source of income, have difficulty finding a home as a result of stigma associated with these income sources. Additionally, Rhode Island has adopted *Opening Doors RI*, the State's Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. In order to realize the goals articulated within that plan, we need to make better use of existing housing opportunities. Reducing barriers to housing is one important step in furthering the goal of ending homelessness in our capital City and Rhode Island as whole. **City Ordinance 23686 would specifically address these problems.**

There are a growing number of states and municipalities who have taken a proactive approach to addressing this problem. Fifteen states and Washington DC, as well as seventy-six counties and municipalities nationwide have enacted laws that prohibit housing discrimination based on one's source of income. **Our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut have provided these protections since the late 1980s, with no adverse effect on their private rental market, and more recently Maine and Vermont.**

Similar legislation has been introduced in the General Assembly for several years, and while gaining support in the Senate, has yet to clear the House successfully. We applaud the leadership of the Councilpersons responsible for introducing this ordinance and appreciate their recognition in recognizing the importance of this issue.

The City of Providence has a very real opportunity to be a leader in the State and demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to a safe, healthy, affordable home – and we are hopeful that the City Council will embrace that opportunity and approve the proposed ordinance. I welcome any questions and can be reached at 721-5680 ext. 38.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge  
Executive Director



422 Post Road  
Warwick, RI 02888  
401-467-9940  
www.ricadv.org  
ricadv@ricadv.org  
24-hour Helpline:  
800-494-8100

#### **Member Agencies**

Blackstone Valley  
Advocacy Center  
Domestic Violence  
Resource Center of  
South County  
Elizabeth Buffum  
Chace Center  
Sojourner House  
Women's Resource  
Center

#### **Task Force**

Sisters Overcoming  
Abusive Relationships

#### **Affiliate Members**

Center for Southeast  
Asians  
Crossroads Rhode Island  
Family Service of Rhode  
Island  
Progreso Latino  
YWCA Rhode Island

January 13, 2020

Councilwoman Jo-Ann Ryan, Chair  
Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council  
25 Dorrance Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: **In support of Proposed City Ordinance 23686**

On behalf of our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) appreciates this opportunity to express our **support of City Ordinance 23686**. This is a fair housing ordinance that would prohibit discrimination based on a tenants lawful source of income, such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income. Annually, Rhode Island's domestic violence/sexual assault Helpline and hotlines answer over 13,000 calls, many related to questions about safe housing options.

City Ordinance 23686 would include fair housing protections based on "lawful source of income." RI state law already guarantees equal housing opportunities regardless of the fact that a tenant or applicant is threatened with being the victim of domestic abuse, or has sought a restraining order for protection from domestic abuse. The RICADV's Family Violence Option Advocacy Program provides services and referrals to many victims of domestic violence who receive forms of public assistance in Rhode Island. Safe housing options are vital to the survivors we serve.

Poverty and income inequality are root causes of domestic violence. 1 in 4 American women report having experienced a negative impact from physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. The societal costs associated with intimate partner violence are substantial. According to the CDC, the lifetime per-victim cost is \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men. The lifetime economic cost to the U.S. population is \$3.6 trillion. This economic cost estimate includes almost 32 million women and 12 million men who are victims of intimate partner violence during their lives.<sup>1</sup>

For victims that rely on public assistance, child support, Medicaid, Section 8 or other housing subsidies to maintain financial independence and stability, an equal housing protection law including "lawful source of income" would be immensely helpful to ensure safe and fair housing. Loss of financial stability is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. No victim of domestic violence should remain at risk because of a lack of safe, affordable and fair housing opportunities.

Similar legislation has been introduced in the General Assembly for several years, and while gaining support in the Senate, has yet to clear the House successfully. We applaud the leadership of the Councilpersons responsible for introducing this ordinance and appreciate their recognition of the importance of this issue.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to support this important ordinance.

Tonya Harris, Executive Director  
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence

<sup>1</sup> Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>

**Jo-Ann Ryan**  
**Majority Leader**  
**Councilwoman - Ward 5**  
PROVIDENCE CITY HALL  
25 DORRANCE STREET, ROOM 310  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903  
OFFICE: 401-521-7477  
WARD5@PROVIDENCERI.GOV



**COMMITTEES**  
Ordinances, Chairwoman  
Finance, Vice-Chairwoman  
State Legislative Affairs  
Rules  
**BOARDS & COMMISSIONS**  
Providence Water Authority

March 4, 2020

Melissa Sanzaro, Executive Director  
Providence Housing Authority  
100 Broad Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Reports of Housing Discrimination from FHEO in Providence

Dear Ms. Sanzaro,

As Chairwoman of the Providence City Council's Committee on Ordinances, we have before our body an ordinance that proposes to expand the definition of housing discrimination to include discrimination based upon an individual's source of income. To better inform our Committee, I am hoping that your office can share with us data related to any filings or reports of discrimination received by your office.

Proponents of the ordinance indicate that discrimination based upon an individual's source of income by landlords is problematic, but without data, it is difficult for our committee to make informed decisions. The information we are requesting will better help us understand the needs of our community and how we can shape an ordinance that removes barriers to both renters and landlords alike.

Please consider this a formal request, and certainly, we are not asking for specific details of complaints. We are interested in knowing how many discrimination filings or reports your office has received on an annual basis for at least the past five years. If available, we would request this data be broken out to show the type of discrimination alleged.

This Ordinance is currently before our Committee, and we are requesting that this information be provided at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to your shared data and thank you for the work you do for the residents of Providence.

Sincerely,

Jo-Ann Ryan, Majority Leader  
Providence City Council  
Councilwoman – Ward 5

**Jo-Ann Ryan**  
**Majority Leader**  
**Councilwoman - Ward 5**  
PROVIDENCE CITY HALL  
25 DORRANCE STREET, ROOM 310  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903  
OFFICE: 401-521-7477  
WARDS@PROVIDENCERI.GOV



**COMMITTEES**  
Ordinances, Chairwoman  
Finance, Vice-Chairwoman  
State Legislative Affairs  
Rules  
**BOARDS & COMMISSIONS**  
Providence Water Authority

March 4, 2020

Nancy Smith Greer, Field Office Director  
HUD – Providence Field Office  
380 Westminster Street, Suite 547  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Reports of Housing Discrimination from FHEO in Providence

Dear Ms. Smith Greer,

As Chairwoman of the Providence City Council's Committee on Ordinances, we have before our body an ordinance that proposes to expand the definition of housing discrimination to include discrimination based upon an individual's source of income. To better inform our Committee, I am hoping that your office can share with us data related to any filings or reports of discrimination received by the FHEO that originated in the City of Providence, as well as the State of Rhode Island as a whole.

Proponents of the ordinance indicate that discrimination based upon an individual's source of income by landlords is problematic, but without data, it is difficult for our committee to make informed decisions. The information we are requesting will better help us understand the needs of our community and how we can shape an ordinance that removes barriers to both renters and landlords alike.

Please consider this a formal request, and certainly, we are not asking for specific details of complaints. We are interested in knowing how many discrimination filings or reports your office has received on an annual basis for at least the past five years. If available, we would request this data be broken out to show reports related to the City of Providence as well as the State of Rhode Island as a whole, as well as the type of discrimination alleged.

This Ordinance is currently before our Committee, and we are requesting that this information be provided at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to your shared data and thank you for the work you do for the residents of Providence.

Sincerely,

Jo-Ann Ryan, Majority Leader  
Providence City Council  
Councilwoman – Ward 5

Michelle Taylor

62 Doyle Ave

Providence

Councilwoman LaFortune:

I have heard that the city is making Section 8 mandatory for landlords to accept. I have lived at my current property for over 14 years. The new owners, even though from out of state have not dramatically increased my rent because they did not want to displace me, having been born and brought up in the neighborhood.

I pay \$725 for a 2 bedroom unit, which is already under market. This new legislation will drive up my rent and force me out of the place my family and I grew up in. All landlords will go after what Section 8 is paying, I looked it up and it was over \$1500. I am on a fixed income and this would render me without an apartment.

Please DO THE RIGHT THING. The people this affects most are the ones not receiving help from the state, this looks good but will make it worse for people like me

Thank you

MICHELLE TAYLOR

TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN – Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 202

I am completely opposed to making it mandatory for landlords to accept Section 8 as written in the legislation. I currently pay \$945 for a 3 bedroom apartment at 40 Russo st in Providence. HUD pays much more, I have family members who use the program.

I receive no assistance and am already struggling to keep up with my rent in this pandemic. If my landlord decides to go after Section 8 tenants, which she will, 6 families with children in my building will be affected

Please vote No

Thank you,

Thalia Marquez and family

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thalia Marquez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Chairperson Ryan

Hon Members of the Ordinance Committee

City of Providence

**Legislation to provide opportunities for affordable housing regardless of source of income are misguided**

Legislation or ordinances are not an effective process to ensure opportunities for those with rent subsidies. Providence has a higher voucher utilization rate than Boston where such an approach has been adopted. The misguided view that landlords discriminate against tenants with vouchers, fails to recognize the reality that landlords weigh the regulatory costs, the red tape, the lack of support from PHA and other such issues associated with the program in deciding whether to participate. Let us be clear. Most landlords accept every kind of voucher payment there is. **It is the PHA voucher program that is poorly run and overly burdensome to a smaller landlord.**

Indeed, the voucher amount level in the Providence market can be 30 to 35% higher than private rents that are obtained outside the program. What does this mean? **A quick survey of landlords revealed that many landlords are charging rents that are significantly below what section 8 is paying.** If the city makes it mandatory for landlords to accept the program, Section 8 rents will be the baseline for all landlords. The common argument to this would be that there are

limited Section 8 vouchers and landlords will have to lower their rents when Section 8 vouchers have rented what they need. Section 8 pays \$1182 on a 2 bedroom apartment on the south side, over \$1500 in Mount Hope on the East Side. You can be sure, once landlords advertise their units with these prices, they will not be willing to drop them much further and even if they do, they will be still higher than what many renters are currently paying. **The vast majority of unsubsidized renters in the City of Providence will be affected in the form of rising rents.** Renters who are already not receiving financial assistance from ANY SOURCE and who are on limited incomes will be impacted. These are in many cases minorities and lifelong renters. **So, should this legislation pass, the city will actually raise the rents for most tenants because Source of Income is look-good, feel-good legislation**

The city did not pay attention to our warning calls in 2010 when it hiked the tax differential between owner and non-owner occupied rates. The common refrain was, "Landlords can afford to pay". That one decision resulted in the start of the rise in rents as we predicted. Don't make the same mistake with Source of Income. **In addition, should this pass, many landlords will go to a month-to-month lease causing further displacement, one of the many unintended consequences of this legislation.**

#### **Do It The Right Way:**

Given the city's identified problem, indicating that there are 10,000 on the waiting list for vouchers, rather than waiting for apartments that will accept them, the focus seems entirely misplaced. You need more vouchers, not apartments!

There is virtually no doubt that many of those on the waiting list currently take advantage of private rental arrangements available for significantly less than the voucher. If we require landlords to participate in these programs rather than incentivize it, their investment in meeting program inspections and administrative costs in dealing with program tenants puts pressure on their rents to rise to the voucher level. This is undercutting affordable housing, not providing it.

It is true that there is currently a low vacancy rate in Providence and there are worries that if there were success in reducing the waiting list, that there wouldn't be enough housing for new vouchers. But in a significant number of cases the new vouchers would go to people already occupying Providence housing so the case is for some units to come into the program but not a sudden further imbalance in supply. In a strategy that, from time to time, describes itself as carrot and stick, we see all stick and no carrot. The city has at its disposal a most obvious incentive it can provide to those who rent in the Section 8 program, which is to **abate the taxes of landlords to the "owner occupied" rate (reflecting the square footage and term of actual rental in the Section 8 program)**. This can be relatively easily monitored where the landlord provides copies of their Section 8 receipts for the previous year with the Dec 31<sup>st</sup> certification of taxable value. So, the value is established by the previous year's usage and not subject to change during the tax year keeping the tax base stable and recognizing the contribution of landlords who maintain housing for these voucher programs.

While this would not be as inexpensive as the 8% rate of gross rents provided to various institutional affordable housing projects, it would be a similar recognition of the service provided. Meanwhile that 8% program ought to be reconsidered or reconfigured in light of the possibility that higher property taxes for the larger institutional housing operations could be fairly recovered from the federal government.

**Another alternative is to make it mandatory for buildings that are 7 units and above.** This approach will add more inventory for PHA while not raising rents for other tenants, again many of whom are paying below market rents, let alone Section 8 rents

We urge you to reject this legislation while well intentioned, has unintended consequences for the vast majority of Providence renters

Sincerely,

The Members of the Providence Apartment Association



rhode island > [housing](#) >

[apartments / housing for rent](#)

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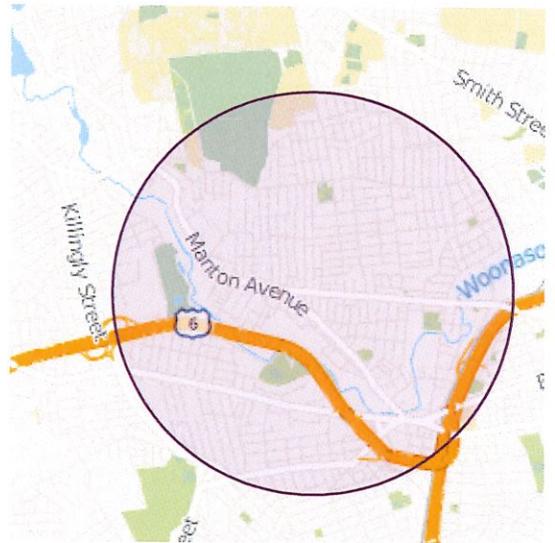


Posted 6 days ago on: 2021-01-21 09:42

Contact Information:

### \$875 / 1br - 1 BEDROOM APT - NEW WINDOWS, NEW KITCHEN, FRESH PAINT - 1 CAR PARKING (Greenwood Street, Providence, RI)

image 1 of 7



condo

1BR / 1Ba

no laundry on site

detached garage



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favorite

hide



Contact Information:

# \$875 / 1br - 1 BEDROOM APT - NEW WINDOWS, NEW KITCHEN, FRESH PAINT - 1 CAR PARKING

(Greenwood Street, Providence, RI)

image 1 of 7



condo

1BR / 1Ba

no laundry on site

detached garage

GREENWOOD STREET, PROVIDENCE, RI 02909

1 BEDROOM APARTMENT  
NEW GAS HEATER  
NEW WINDOWS  
NEW KITCHEN  
FRESH PAINT  
1 CAR PARKING

NOT APPROVED FOR SECTION 8 TENANTS  
NO PETS  
NO SMOKERS

\$875 - UTILITIES (GAS AND ELECTRIC) INCLUDED

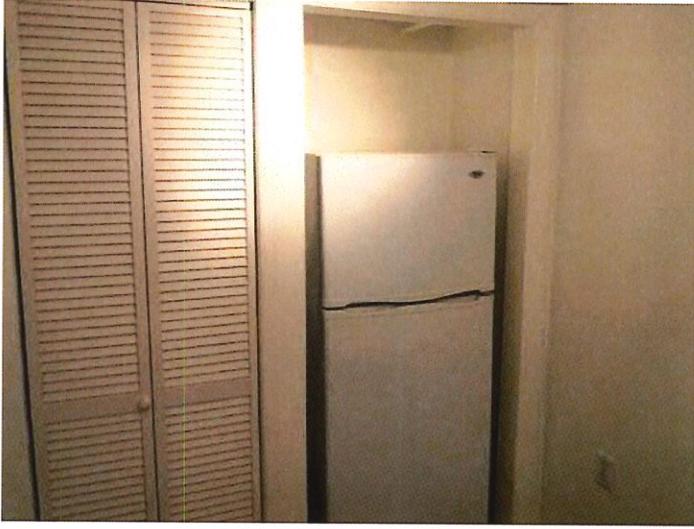
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IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL [show contact info](#) TO SCHEDULE A SHOWING.











**Zillow**

Save Share More

**\$1,300+/mo** 1 bd | 1 ba | 600 sqft

193-195 Vinton Street - 193-1, 193 Vinton St #1, Providence, RI 02909

Apartment for rent

Request a tour

Request to apply

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax



**Zillow**

Save Share More

**\$1,300+/mo** 1 bd | 1 ba | 600 sqft

193-195 Vinton Street - 193-1, 193 Vinton St #1, Providence, RI 02909

Request a tour

Request to apply

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax

Travel times

Add work destination

**Overview**

Contacts 22

Available February 15th! Be steps from Seven Stars Bakery, The Avery and many of the best restaurants and shops in Providence in these newly renovated, pet-friendly apartments in the heart of Providence's West Side.



**Zillow**

Save Share More

**\$1,300+/mo** 1 bd | 1 ba | 600 sqft

193-195 Vinton Street - 193-1, 193 Vinton St #1, Providence, RI 02909

[Request a tour](#)

[Request to apply](#)

[Overview](#) [Facts and features](#) [Rent Zestimate](#) [Price and tax](#)

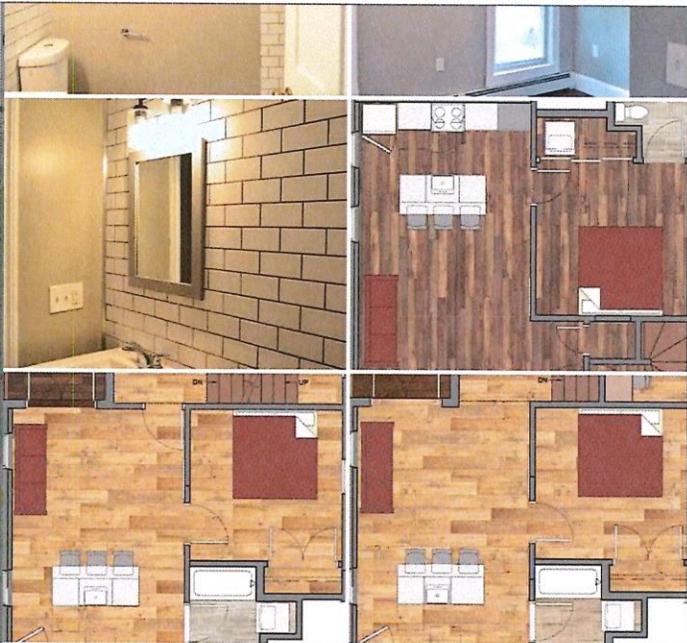
Enjoy granite countertops, brand new black stainless appliances, and a subway tile and marble bathroom. Top it all off with a washer and dryer in your apartment!

These 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor apartments in a 6-unit building include 1 bedroom and 1 full bathroom with a deck, backyard, and available off-street parking.

Pets are welcome.

Sorry, no section 8.

12-month lease required.



**Zillow**

Save Share More

**\$1,300+/mo** 1 bd | 1 ba | 600 sqft

193-195 Vinton Street - 193-1, 193 Vinton St #1, Providence, RI 02909

[Request a tour](#)

[Request to apply](#)

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Parking fee not included in rent.

Applicant requirements:

Verifiable income of all occupants combined should equal 3x rent.

Minimum credit score of 600.

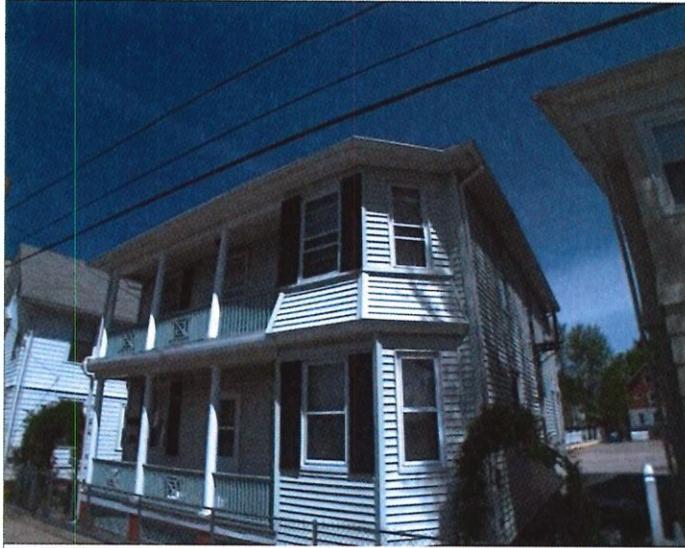
Positive previous land lord references.

6-unit apartment building in the West Side of Providence.

[Read less](#)

Learn more about the building:

[193-195 Vinton Street - 193-1 Apartments](#)



Zillow

Save Share More

\$1,200/mo 3 bd | 1 ba | 900 sqft

124 Murray St FLOOR 1, Providence, RI 02909

Apartment for rent

Request a tour

Request to apply

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax



Travel times



Zillow

Save Share More

\$1,200/mo 3 bd | 1 ba | 900 sqft

124 Murray St FLOOR 1, Providence, RI 02909

Request a tour

Request to apply

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax

Add work destination

Overview

Days listed 31

Contacts 90

1st Floor, 3 Bedroom, 1 Bath

- 1st floor, 3 Bedrooms, 1 Bath, Eat in Kitchen
- Parking for 2 Cars

- No Pets
- No Laundry on the premise (Laundromat extremely close by)



Save Share More

**\$1,200/mo** 3 bd | 1 ba | 900 sqft

124 Murray St FLOOR 1, Providence, RI 02909

[Request a tour](#)

[Request to apply](#)

[Overview](#) [Facts and features](#) [Rent Zestimate](#) [Price and tax](#)

- No Utilities
- No Smoking
- Not accepting Section 8

First & Security due at time of lease

Must be able to provide proof of income (2 months of most recent Pay stubs)

Total monthly gross household income must be at least \$3600.

Each adult must pass a credit & background check and have no evictions (\$38 Fee per Adult- Non refundable).

Source: Zillow Rental Manager



Zillow

Save Share More

\$1,700/mo 4 bd | 1.5 ba | 2,360 sqft

79 Andem St, Providence, RI 02908

House for rent Rent Zestimate®: \$1,700/mo

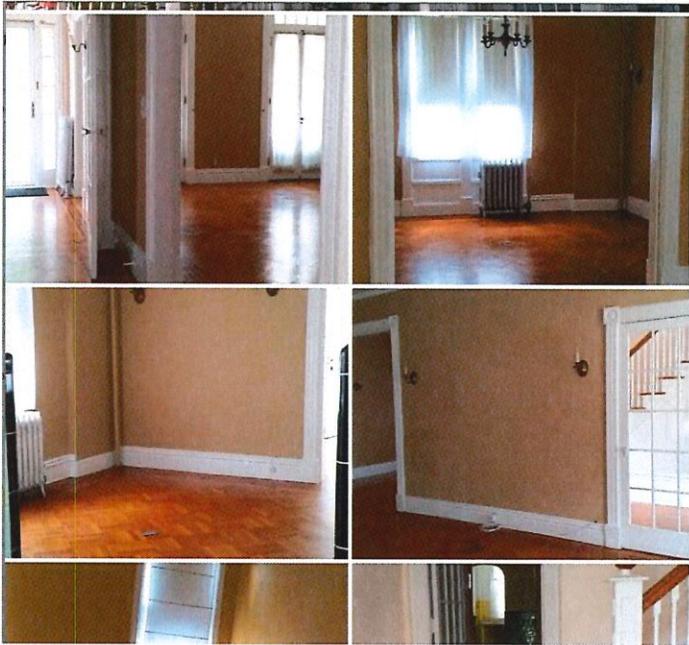
Request a tour

Apply now

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax



Travel times



Zillow

Save Share More

\$1,700/mo 4 bd | 1.5 ba | 2,360 sqft

79 Andem St, Providence, RI 02908

Request a tour

Apply now

Overview Facts and features Rent Zestimate Price and tax

Add work destination

Overview

Days listed 30 | Contacts 38 | Applications 2

Nice, beautiful and spacious 4 Bathroom Townhouse, 1 1/2 Bathroom, Parking Available, freshly painted, 1 year lease, not pet allowed, no smoking, Not Considering any voucher, asking price \$1,700.00.

Available Now Must see!!



January 27, 2021

Providence City Council  
Providence, RI 02903

To the Members of the Council:

On behalf of Foster Forward and the hundreds of young people and families we serve, we are pleased to support an ordinance change to prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful source of income, whether it is from rental assistance, disability, social security or other source. As you know, state and federal income supports provide much needed resources to help low-income households afford their housing costs. Currently, prospective renters who receive government assistance are frequently denied tenancy simply because they receive assistance. Landlords often rely on stereotypes of those who receive income assistance instead of assessing the tenant based on their qualities as a renter.

As a HUD funded provider of rapid re-housing for homeless youth who have experienced foster care, we regularly see the impact of source of income discrimination on the clients we serve. It is difficult to identify landlords who are willing to accept tenants who hold vouchers or receive SSI/SSDI or other subsidies. This ordinance change would protect prospective tenants from being discriminated against because of their lawful source of income. There is nothing in this ordinance change that would prevent landlords from screening tenants for other factors, such as poor credit or bad references. Additionally, this ordinance change would not prevent landlords from asking a tenant about the source and amount of income they earn.

According to a study by SouthCoast Fair Housing regarding housing discrimination against people with rental assistance vouchers in Rhode Island, although families with a voucher can afford more than a third of rental listings, they will ultimately be shut out of 93% of all units, regardless of individual qualifications. Providence can increase housing opportunity by ending income-based housing discrimination. Fourteen states including **Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and Vermont**, the District of Columbia plus 76 counties and municipalities have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination based on source of income.

This ordinance change would give those with any lawful source of income the opportunity to be fairly considered as a tenant. We urge you to support passage of this change.

Sincerely,

Lisa Guillette  
Executive Director



## Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless

1070 Main St, Suite 304, Pawtucket, RI 02860  
[www.rhomeless.org](http://www.rhomeless.org) (401) 721-5685

27 January 2021

### **In support of proposed ordinance to ban discrimination based on source of income**

Chairperson Ryan and members of the Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances,

Legalized housing discrimination plays a real and pivotal role in perpetuating homelessness. It creates an high insurmountable barrier for Rhode Islanders trying to find a safe, secure, affordable home. The RI Coalition for the Homeless gives our strong support to the proposed ordinance banning discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful income.

Source of income discrimination is a simple poisonous concept. Simply put, tenants get judged solely on how they will be paying the full amount of rent. These tenants have legal sources of income, and **they can afford the unit**. Still, the message is: 'Yes, you can afford this apartment, yes, you have legal income, but I don't like it. So I will not rent to you.' This perfectly legal discrimination literally traps people in homelessness. It presents a barrier that no amount of work or self-advocacy can overcome. Transitioning from homelessness to being permanently housed is virtually impossible without federal and/or state income support. According to recent shelter data, 51% of all individuals and 35% of all families experiencing homelessness have zero annual income (Source: Annual Shelter Count in HMIS, 2018-2019). It may take years for a household to receive income support. Furthermore, some of these resources have a built-in expiration date. If an individual/family does not find an apartment (read: does not find a landlord willing to accept the voucher), they risk losing their subsidy.

A legal source of income can take many forms: Social Security benefit programs, alimony, the Rhode Island Crime Victim Compensation Program, child support, VASH (a supportive housing voucher specifically for veterans). Thousands of Rhode Islanders have lost their jobs due to the current pandemic and now rely on other sources of income to pay for housing and other basic needs. Rhode Islanders deserve to be considered based on their qualifications as a tenant, not by their legal source of income. Furthermore, thousands of our neighbors have lost their traditional sources of income due to this pandemic. People must rely on other SOI supports, such as Emergency Rental Assistance, to keep a roof over their heads. In the midst of a major public health disaster, when the most important thing we can do to stay safe is stay at home, does the Providence City Council truly want to make it harder for families in need to have a safe, secure place to call home?

On any given night, 1,104 Rhode Islanders will experience homelessness. SOI discrimination is a cause, and thus should be made illegal. Please give this ordinance your full support. Banning discrimination based on source of income will help ensure all Providence residents have equal access to obtaining safe and affordable housing. Housing ends homelessness.



**Rhode Island Coalition  
for the Homeless**

1070 Main St, Suite 304, Pawtucket, RI 02860  
[www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org) (401) 721-5685

Sincerely,

Kristina Contreras Fox (she/her/ella)  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless  
[kristina@rihomeless.org](mailto:kristina@rihomeless.org) | (401) 424-1635



January 26 2021

Councilwoman Jo-An Ryan, Chair

Committee on Ordinances

Providence City Council

25 Dorrance Street

Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of Proposed City Ordinance 23686

On behalf of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (D.A.R.E) Tenants and Homeowners Association, and low income individuals of Providence, I write in support of City Ordinance 23686, proposed legislation that seeks to provide protection to households from housing discrimination based on their lawful source of income such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income, etc.

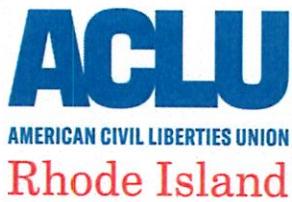
If established, this proposed ordinance would allow low income tenants greater access to housing in Providence. The stigma attached to low income families who pay some or all of their rent from state and federal assistance causes difficulty in finding a home. There is a current affordable housing shortage and this impacts the more vulnerable population. Enacting laws that build on housing choice is a good thing for all parties including renters and landlords.

Those affected by Source of Income Discrimination are not a protected class however the city of Providence has an opportunity to adapt like neighboring states and municipalities such as Massachusetts, Maine and Washington DC that prohibit housing discrimination.

Respectfully,

Yojaida Heredia

D.A.RE Organizer



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400  
Providence, RI 02903  
Phone: (401) 831-7171  
Fax: (401) 831-7175  
[www.riaclu.org](http://www.riaclu.org)  
[info@riaclu.org](mailto:info@riaclu.org)

**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF PROVIDENCE ORDINANCE 23686:  
SOURCE OF INCOME  
January 27, 2021**

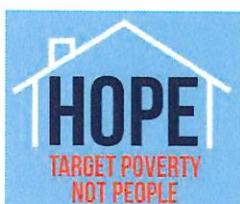
The ACLU of Rhode Island is appreciative of the opportunity to voice our strong support for this ordinance which would prevent landlords from denying a potential tenant's housing application on the basis of their source of income.

Research conducted by Southcoast Fair Housing asks a pivotal question about income: "A dollar is a dollar, no matter where it comes from – right?" As instinctive as the notion may be that income itself is free from bias, Rhode Islanders with non-traditional income sources find themselves at a disadvantage in a housing market that prioritizes pay stubs over Social Security or rental assistance vouchers.

It is time to protect these residents, many of whom are already members of low-income or marginalized communities, from enduring further difficulties in their search for safe and healthy housing. The financial qualification of a tenant should be limited to whether they can reliably and consistently make rent or not, not whether their rent money is coming from a private employer or from subsidy programs. Importantly, this ordinance additionally includes a provision which provides a private right of action for any individuals who are affected by such discrimination, ensuring that affected individuals have a designated pathway for addressing and seeking recourse for the discrimination they may encounter.

We are glad to see that such an important piece of policy is before this committee today, and we urge its swift passage.

Thank you for your consideration.



January 27, 2021

Councilwoman Jo-Ann Ryan, Chair  
Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council  
25 Dorrance Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of Proposed City Ordinance 23686

On behalf of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere and the low income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in support of City Ordinance 23686, proposed legislation that seeks to provide protection to households from housing discrimination based on their lawful source of income, such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income.

**Imagine** waiting years on a waitlist simply to receive a voucher, and then learning that the very thing you were told would be the solution to your struggles, would be the problem as well. Last year's study that HOPE conducted in partnership with SouthCoast Fair Housing makes clear that this is an unfortunate reality for many Rhode Islanders. When phone surveyors as part of the study mentioned to prospective landlords that they planned to pay their rent with a voucher, nearly 2 out of 3 times, callers were flat out told "no" by landlords, simply due to their source of income. When asked why, we heard statements from landlords such as: "It's not about you, it's about the voucher." Allowing SOI discrimination to exist means that for voucher holders, it does not matter how qualified of a tenant you are because the possession of a voucher alone can serve as a barrier to housing. In other words, SOI discrimination completely undermines the purpose of the HCV program, which is supposed to make housing more accessible.

Even more striking, SouthCoast's study found that when examining the state's available housing stock **in total**, after taking into account the severe **lack of affordable units** and **the prevalence of SOI discrimination**, an individual with a voucher is **shut out from over 90%** of the housing market listed every day in Rhode Island. **Further, these numbers do not take into account how SOI discrimination may be used as a proxy by which a landlord can discriminate against other protected classes, such as race, gender, and family status.** In fact, some landlords prefer the consistency of receiving rent payments directly from the government. That landlords so frequently reject voucher holders despite this benefit suggests that proxy discrimination against protected classes could be a large motivation for SOI discrimination. We know that in Rhode Island, 70 percent of voucher holders are families with children, 87 percent are households headed by women and 20 percent are black. Allowing SOI discrimination to continue to exist permits these overt forms of discrimination to persist in our housing market, completely undermining the lawful protections already in place.

If enacted, the proposed ordinance would provide low-income tenants greater access to housing options in the City of Providence. More specifically the proposed ordinance would increase access to higher quality rental homes and expand neighborhood choice. Given the ongoing and persistent shortage of affordable housing options in Rhode Island, creating laws that expand access to housing choice, particularly among our most vulnerable populations, is a good thing — for renters, for landlords, for neighborhoods, and for the City. Many low income families, who pay part or all of their rent from state and federal housing assistance, social security, social security disability, child support or any other lawful source of income, have difficulty finding a home as a result of stigma associated with these income sources. Additionally, Rhode Island has adopted Opening Doors RI, the State's Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. In order to realize the goals articulated within that plan, we need to make better use of existing housing opportunities. Reducing barriers to housing is one important step in furthering the goal of ending homelessness in our capital City and Rhode Island as whole. City Ordinance 23686 would specifically address these problems.

There are a growing number of states and municipalities who have taken a proactive approach to addressing this problem. Fifteen states and Washington DC, as well as seventy-six counties and municipalities nationwide have enacted laws that prohibit housing discrimination based on one's source of income. Our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut have provided these protections since the late 1980s, with no adverse effect on their private rental market, and more recently Maine and Vermont.

Similar legislation has been introduced in the General Assembly for several years, and while gaining support in the Senate, has yet to clear the House successfully. We applaud the leadership of the Councilpersons responsible for introducing this ordinance and appreciate their recognition in recognizing the importance of this issue.

The City of Providence has a very real opportunity to be a leader in the State and demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to a safe, healthy, affordable home — and we are hopeful that the City Council will embrace that opportunity and approve the proposed ordinance. I welcome any questions and can be reached at 721-5680 ext. 38.

Respectfully submitted,

Gabe Mernoff

Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere



422 Post Road  
Warwick, RI 02888  
401-467-9940  
www.ricadv.org  
ricadv@ricadv.org  
24-hour Helpline:  
800-494-8100

#### **Member Agencies**

Blackstone Valley  
Advocacy Center  
Domestic Violence  
Resource Center of  
South County  
Elizabeth Buffum  
Chace Center  
Women's Resource Center

#### **Task Force**

Sisters Overcoming  
Abusive Relationships

#### **Affiliate Members**

Center for Southeast Asians  
Crossroads Rhode Island  
Family Service of Rhode Island  
McAuley Ministries –  
McAuley Village  
Progreso Latino

January 26, 2021

Chairperson Jo-Ann Ryan  
Members of the Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council  
25 Dorrance St.  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of proposed ordinance to ban discrimination based on source of income

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On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, we are writing in support of the proposed ordinance that seeks to provide protection to households from housing discrimination based on their lawful source of income, such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income.

*If enacted, the proposed ordinance would provide low-income tenants greater access to housing options in the City of Providence. More specifically, the proposed ordinance would increase access to higher quality rental homes and expand neighborhood choice. **RI law already guarantees equal housing opportunities regardless of the fact that a tenant or applicant is a victim of domestic abuse, or has sought a restraining order for protection from domestic abuse. Expanded safe housing options and choices are vital for survivors of intimate partner violence.*** The RICADV's Family Violence Option Advocacy Program works with DHS to provide services and referrals to many victims of domestic violence who receive forms of public assistance in Rhode Island.

Poverty and income inequality are root causes of domestic violence. 1 in 4 American women report having experienced a negative impact from physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. The societal costs associated with intimate partner violence are substantial. According to the CDC, the lifetime per-victim cost is \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men. The lifetime economic cost to the U.S. population is \$3.6 trillion. This economic cost estimate includes almost 32 million women and 12 million men who are victims of intimate partner violence during their lives.<sup>1</sup>

For victims that rely on public assistance, child support, Medicaid, Section 8 or other housing subsidies to maintain financial independence and stability, an equal housing protection law including "lawful source of income" would be immensely helpful to ensure safe and fair housing. Loss of financial stability is a prominent reason that victims are unable to leave an abusive relationship. No victim of domestic violence should remain at risk because of a lack of safe, affordable and fair housing opportunities.

There are a growing number of states and municipalities who have taken a proactive approach to addressing this problem. Fifteen states and Washington DC, as well as

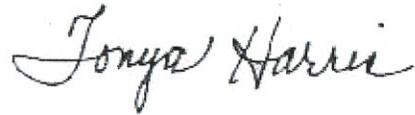
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<sup>1</sup> Intimate partner violence: Consequences. *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>

seventy-six counties and municipalities nationwide have enacted laws that prohibit housing discrimination based on one's source of income.

The City of Providence has a very real opportunity to be a leader in the State and demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to a safe, healthy, affordable home - and we are hopeful that the Committee and Council will embrace that opportunity and approve the proposed ordinance. Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tonya Harris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Tonya Harris  
Executive Director - RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence



January 27, 2021

Councilor Jo-Ann Ryan, Chair  
Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council  
25 Dorrance Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: In support of Proposed City Ordinance 23686 to ban discrimination based on source of income**

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies and the Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, HNRI writes in support of City Ordinance 23686, proposed legislation that seeks to provide protection to households from housing discrimination based on their lawful source of income, such as Section 8 housing assistance or social security income.

If enacted, the proposed ordinance will provide low-income tenants greater access to housing options in the City of Providence, increasing access to higher quality rental homes and will expand neighborhood choice.

Given the ongoing and persistent shortage of affordable housing options in Rhode Island, creating laws that expand access to housing choice is important for renters, landlords, neighborhoods, and the City. Many low-income families who utilize federal housing assistance, social security, disability benefits, child support or any other lawful source of income have difficulty finding a home because of stigma associated with these income sources.

Rhode Island needs to increase production of affordable homes and remove barriers for people to access safe, affordable homes that already exist as part of our rental stock. Preventing discrimination against tenants who pay their rent with sources other than traditional employment is an important step to prevent and end homelessness in our capitol city and the state.

A growing number of states and municipalities are proactively addressing this issue, and our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut have provided these protections since the late 1980s, with no adverse effect on their private rental market. The Council and the City of Providence have an opportunity lead by example and demonstrate the City's commitment to ensuring all its residents are able to access a safe, healthy and affordable home. We are hopeful the Ordinance Committee and the entire Council will embrace this opportunity and approve the proposed ordinance. I welcome any questions and can be reached at 721-5680 ext. 38, [mlodge@housingnetworkri.org](mailto:mlodge@housingnetworkri.org).

Respectfully,



Melina Lodge, Executive Director



1005 Main Street, Suite 1210  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
Office: (401) 285-2550  
southcoastfairhousing.org

January 27, 2021

Councilmembers Jo-Ann Ryan, Carmen Castillo, Mary Kay Harris, Nicholas Narducci, and Rachel Miller  
Ordinance Committee  
Providence City Council  
Providence, RI

Dear Chairperson Ryan, Vice Chairperson Castillo, Councilmember Harris, Councilmember Narducci, and Councilmember Miller,

SouthCoast Fair Housing (SCFH) strongly supports Ordinance 23686, “An Ordinance in Amendment of Chapter 16, “Offenses and Miscellaneous Provision,” Article II.” SCFH thanks the Committee for considering this important issue and Councilmember Miller for sponsoring this Ordinance. This Ordinance would prohibit housing discrimination against lawful sources of income, and our ongoing work shows the need for this protection in the Providence community.

Passage of Ordinance 23686 would prohibit housing discrimination against lawful sources of income. Source of income discrimination occurs when a landlord rejects a tenant, or treats them differently, solely because of the *type* of income on which that tenant or family of tenants relies. Currently, private landlords disproportionately reject tenants who receive a Housing Choice Voucher (commonly known as “Section 8”) or other forms of public assistance, causing local families to lose out on valuable housing opportunities. Sadly, these denials are frequently motivated by negative stereotypes rather than an assessment of tenants’ individual merits and ability to pay.

Recently, SCFH released a report entitled “*It’s About the Voucher*”: *Source of Income Discrimination in Rhode Island*.<sup>1</sup> The report presents our research into discrimination against Rhode Island tenants who receive a Housing Choice Voucher, also known as “Section 8.” To quantify the obstacles an average voucher recipient faces, SCFH organized a fair housing testing project in which we (i) monitored online rental listings for discriminatory content and (ii) conducted a phone audit of units around the state.

SCFH found that **while voucher holders can afford more than a third of units statewide, they will ultimately be excluded from 93% of housing opportunities solely because of their source of income and affordability.** Among online listings alone, we observed the following troubling patterns:

- More than 6% of affordable listings **explicitly discriminated** against voucher holders; and

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<sup>1</sup>Available at: <http://southcoastfairhousing.org/its-about-the-voucher/>. This research was completed in partnership with the Brown student group HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere).

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*Working to eradicate housing discrimination and help build inclusive communities  
through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement.*



1005 Main Street, Suite 1210  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
Office: (401) 285-2550  
southcoastfairhousing.org

- Another **15%** of affordable listings screened out voucher holders via **exclusionary minimum income standards**.

When SCFH test callers responded to affordable, facially non-discriminatory listings by phone, **housing providers refused to consider a voucher holder for 63% of remaining units**. For another 11% of units, providers expressed uncertainty. While this study covered the entire state of Rhode Island, Providence listings were 25% of the advertisements used. The Providence area results closely mirrored those of the rest of the state.

Attached to this letter, please find six current examples of electronic advertisements from Providence that explicitly reject voucher holders, found today on Zillow and Craigslist after a cursory search. More examples of these advertisements are readily available throughout popular websites such as Facebook Marketplace and Apartments.com, among others.

Ordinance 23686, “An Ordinance in Amendment of Chapter 16, “Offenses and Miscellaneous Provision,” Article II.” would protect Providence tenants from income-based discrimination, helping the city to promote integration, housing stability, and upward economic mobility, goals reflected in Providence’s Anti-Displacement and Comprehensive Housing Strategy draft plan. **The Proposed Ordinance does not restrict landlords’ existing ability to screen tenants based on other lawful factors**. Landlords may still confirm the source and amount of a tenant’s income in order to ensure that he or she can fulfill monthly payment obligations. Additionally, owner-occupied buildings of three or less units are exempt from this Proposed Amendment. While affordability of needed repairs is an issue that affects landlords throughout our city, this exemption means that landlords who only own one building will not need to comply with this Ordinance. Further, Providence already offers financial help for owner-occupied home repairs up to \$25,000 through the CDBG Home Repair Program. While supporting small landlords is important, a racial equity lens also shows that supporting low-income families of color is also important, and this means supporting voucher-holding families, in particular.

Through both SCFH’s work and other organizations’ deep dives into housing discrimination, we can see that often a denial of a family or individual by a housing provider is stated as occurring because of the presence of a housing voucher. However, this is often just a proxy for a denial due to protected classes that are currently covered under the law such as race, national origin, and familial status (particularly the presence of a young child under the age of 6). Housing providers may get a “free pass” to discriminate for these reasons merely because of the presence of a voucher.<sup>2</sup> Since many voucher holders are people of color, it is likely that they may experience denials of housing that they would not if voucher

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<sup>2</sup> See Rebecca Tracy Rotem, Using Disparate Impact Analysis in Fair Housing Act Claims: Landlord Withdrawal From the Section 8 Voucher Program, 78 Fordham L. Rev. 1971 (2010). Available at: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol78/iss4/8>

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*Working to eradicate housing discrimination and help build inclusive communities  
through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement.*



1005 Main Street, Suite 1210  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
Office: (401) 285-2550  
southcoastfairhousing.org

discrimination was prohibited (along with discrimination for other lawful sources of income, such as child support or social security).

While SCFH's research has focused on Housing Choice Voucher ("Section 8") discrimination, this Amendment would also protect those with Social Security benefits, those who rely on child support payments, and veterans who receive disability payments, among other types of income that is not connected to employment. While some landlords certainly rent to individuals with these types of income, SCFH's research has shown that many will not. It is imperative to keep Providence residents in Providence, including those who are disabled or low-income. This Ordinance is one important step in doing so.

Sincerely,

Alex West  
SouthCoast Fair Housing

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*Working to eradicate housing discrimination and help build inclusive communities  
through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement.*

27 January 2021

*RE: In support of proposed ordinance to ban discrimination based on source of income*

Chairperson Ryan and members of the Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances,

**I am writing on behalf of Sojourner House in support of the proposed ordinance to ban discrimintaion based on source of income.** Legalized housing discrimination plays a real and pivotal role in perpetuating homelessness. It creates an nigh insurmountable barrier for Rhode Islanders trying to find a safe, secure, affordable home. Sojourner House, an agency dedicated to providing shelter, housing, and supportive services to victims of abuse, gives our strong support to the proposed ordinance banning discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful income.

Source of income discrimination is a dangerous concept, as tenants get judged solely on how they will be paying the full amount of rent. These tenants have legal sources of income, and *they can afford the unit*; however, the message is: 'Yes, you can afford this apartment, yes, you have legal income, but I don't like it. So I will not rent to you.' This legal discrimination literally traps people in homelessness. It presents a barrier that no amount of work or self-advocacy can overcome. Transitioning from homelessness to being permanently housed is virtually impossible without federal and/or state income support. According to recent shelter data, 51% of all individuals and 35% of all families experiencing homelessness have zero annual income (Source: Annual Shelter Count in HMIS, 2018-2019). It may take years for a household to receive income support. Furthermore, some of these resources have a built-in expiration date. If an individual/family does not find an apartment (read: does not find a landlord willing to accept the voucher), they risk losing their subsidy.

A legal source of income can take many forms: Social Security benefit programs, alimony, the Rhode Island Crime Victim Compensation Program, child support, or VASH (a supportive housing voucher specifically for veterans), just to name a few examples. Thousands of Rhode Islanders have lost their jobs due to the current pandemic and now rely on other sources of income to pay for housing and other basic needs. Rhode Islanders deserve to be considered based on their qualifications as a tenant, not by their legal source of income. Furthermore, thousands of our neighbors have lost their traditional sources of income due to this pandemic. People must rely on other SOI supports, such as Emergency Rental Assistance, to keep a roof over their heads.

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386 Smith Street | Providence, RI 02908

**Drop-in Center:** 401.861.6191 | **Fax:** 401.861.6157 | **Housing Office:** 401.808.6889

**Helplines:** 401.765.3232 | 401.658.4334 | **Web:** [www.sojournerrri.org](http://www.sojournerrri.org)



On any given night, 1,104 Rhode Islanders will experience homelessness. As we know at Sojourner House, domestic violence and sexual assault are two of the leading causes of homelessness, and victims are often placed in an untenable situation of returning to an abusive partner or not having a place to live. SOI discrimination is a cause, and thus should be made illegal. Please give this ordinance your full support. Banning discrimination based on source of income will help ensure all Providence residents have equal access to obtaining safe and affordable housing. Housing ends homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vanessa Volz".

Vanessa Volz, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Sojourner House

---

386 Smith Street | Providence, RI 02908

Drop-in Center: 401.861.6191 | Fax: 401.861.6157 | Housing Office: 401.808.6889

Helplines: 401.765.3232 | 401.658.4334 | Web: [www.sojournerri.org](http://www.sojournerri.org)



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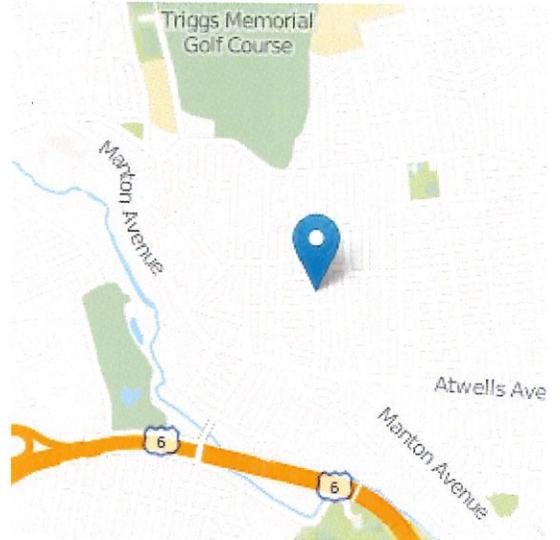


Posted 3 days ago on: 2021-01-24 08:01

Contact Information:

### \$1,000 / 1br - 1 BR Apartment - all utils incl. Avail. 1/30/21 (providence)

image 1 of 9



sisson st near ticknor

apartment

1BR / 1Ba

no laundry on site

off-street parking

Thoroughly cleaned and painted.....

1 Br Basement Apt.1 BR, LR, , eat in kitchen. Bathroom has standup shower with storage cabinet.

All utilities included== Heat, Hot water, electric, wifi and cable.

1 off street parking spot for 1 small car. NO PETS No Storage.

Snow and trash removal. Back yard for all tenants use.

\$1,000.00 per month rent and \$1,000.00 sec. deposit ( \$2,000.00 to move in)

no fee rental application required...A complete and thorough back ground check will be done

Available 1/30/21..... Not section 8 certified

QR Code Link to This Post

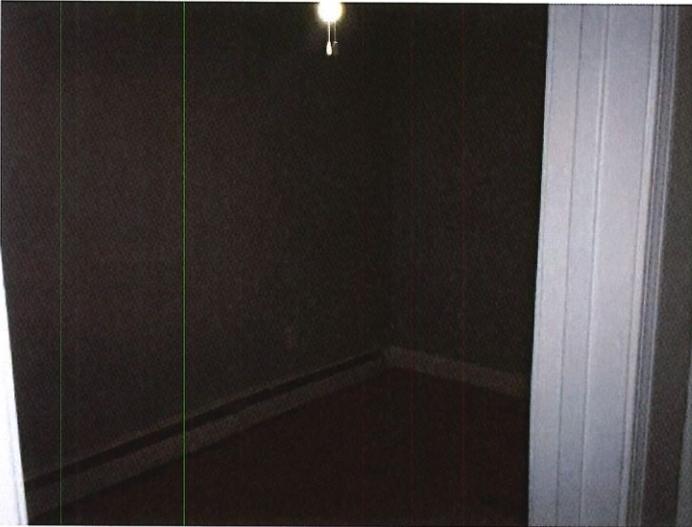


Please respond with phone number and best time to call

Thanks for looking...stay safe

Conveniently located....Ripta...Stop and shop...speedway store..







rhode island > [housing](#) >

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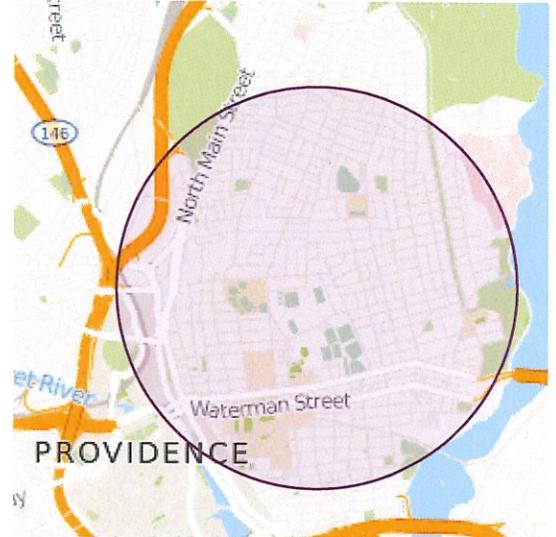


Posted 2 months ago on: 2020-12-04 21:39

Contact Information:

### \$1,285 / 2br - 2BD - \$1285 - Spacious (Providence)

image 1 of 11



106 E Manning St

2BR / 1Ba

available now

apartment

laundry in bldg

no smoking

off-street parking

rent period: **yearly**

Amazingly Priced Wayland Square Unit, Heat and Hot Water Included - Seaflower Property Group, LLC

NO PETS

NO SMOKING

NO SUBLETTING

Available 01/01/2020

Coin Laundry On Site

Sunny and spacious garden level, two bedroom, one bathroom apartment with gleaming hardwood floors throughout, in the heart of Wayland Square! Galley kitchen with dishwasher, open dining and living area and ample closets.

QR Code Link to This Post

Secured entry with intercom system. Rentable private storage and large coin laundry facility in the basement. Professionally managed with 24/7 maintenance emergency call center. Unit Includes heat, hot water, cold water, sewer, and parking for one car only.

Tenant pays electricity, phone/cable/TV

Seaflower Property Group evaluates all applicants equally based on verification of adequate income, rental or mortgage history, credit and criminal background. The application fee is \$37 and non-refundable. This facility does not accept cosigners/guarantors nor housing vouchers at this time. Upon acceptance, first month's rent and a security deposit equal to one month's rent is due. They offer standard 12 month lease terms.

\*Note\* Pictures are ACTUAL of the unit. The floor plan is of a nearly identical unit that is "mirrored" or "flipped" from the actual unit.

#### Amenities

- Replacement Windows
- Secured Entry
- East Side
- Electric Stove
- 24 Hour Maintenance Emergencies
- Storage-Rentable
- Living Room
- Ceramic Tile
- One Year Leases
- Heat Included
- Outdoor Space
- Parking
- Burglar Alarm
- Snow Removal
- Dishwasher
- Tile Floors
- Easy Highway Access
- Lower Level
- Coin Laundry
- Bike Path
- Noise Ordinance
- No Smoking
- No Pets
- Professionally Managed
- Wayland Square
- Two Bedrooms



WEST BROADWAY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



26 January 2021

Councilor Jo-Ann Ryan, Chair  
Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances  
City Hall  
25 Dorrance Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In Support of Proposed Ordinance 23686

Dear Chairwoman Ryan:

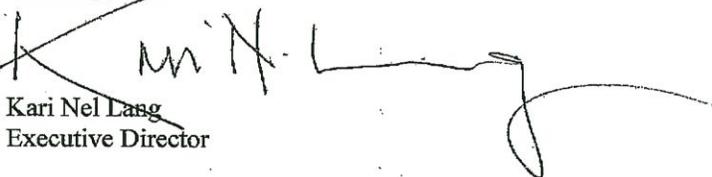
The West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) supports City Ordinance 23686, which would prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person's lawful source of income, whether it be from rental assistance, disability, social security or other source.

As a part of our Strategic Planning process in 2018, WBNA went door to door with a survey asking neighbors for issues that were a priority for them. Affordable Housing ranked as the most important issue. During a 2020 WBNA Neighborhood Nights public meeting co-hosted with the Providence Housing Authority, the housing voucher program was explained to neighborhood landlords and they were encouraged to take part in the program. From that meeting, we are proud to say that at least three neighborhood landlords now accept tenants with housing vouchers and WBNA is in the midst of adding a housing voucher unit at one of its properties. Last winter, those landlords and the WBNA testified in support of this ordinance because it would protect prospective tenants from being discriminated against because of their lawful source of income.

According to a SouthCoast Fair Housing study of housing discrimination against people with rental assistance vouchers in Rhode Island, 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. Rhode Island can increase housing opportunities by ending income-based housing discrimination.

This ordinance would send a strong message and would help move the state closer to ensuring all Rhode Islanders have safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

Sincerely,



Kari Nel Lang  
Executive Director

cc: Councilor Mary Kay Harris, Ward 11  
Councilor Rachel Miller, Ward 13



January 26, 2021

The Honorable Jo-Ann Ryan, Chairwoman  
Committee on Ordinances  
Providence City Council

**RE: In support of ordinance to ban discrimination based on source of income**

Dear Chairwoman Ryan:

On behalf of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) I write to express my organization's strong support for adoption of the set of amendments to the Providence Code of Ordinances proposed by Councilwoman Miller aimed at banning residential discrimination based on a tenant's Source of Income.

Since the establishment of our Rhode Island office in 1992, LISC has supported the expansion of affordable housing throughout this state- directly investing hundreds of millions of dollars in housing initiatives from Richmond to Woonsocket and from Burrillville to Little Compton. In Providence we have supported both the expansion of the city's affordable housing supply, as well as the capacity of our Community Development Corporation infrastructure to deliver that supply equitably to city residents. We have provided significant grant and capital dollars to West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation, Smith Hill CDC, Stop Wasting Abandoned Property (SWAP), OMNI Development Corporation, and ONE Neighborhood Builders in support of their collective efforts to improve our neighborhoods and to provide opportunities for our residents to live affordably in safe and quality housing.

But we know that the limited supply of deed-restricted affordable housing in Providence is not enough to meet the demand. The majority of Providence's residents must find housing through the open market. And for too many of those residents, their legal source of income is grounds for landlord discrimination. Discrimination is currently allowed against prospective tenants proposing to pay rent through such legal sources of income as Social Security benefits, alimony, the Rhode Island Crime Victim Compensation Program, child support, and housing voucher programs such as VASH (a supportive housing voucher specifically for veterans). All too often source of income discrimination masks discrimination against protected classes: veterans, the elderly, the disabled, and people of color. Such discrimination should be banned entirely.

According to the 2019 *HousingWorksRI* Housing Fact Book, more than 50% of Providence's renting population is "housing cost burdened." This issue is only exacerbated by source of income discrimination in the housing market. We urge the Providence City Council to take another meaningful step towards addressing the housing cost burdens of too many families by adopting the amendments before you and banning source of income discrimination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanne Cola".

Jeanne Cola  
Executive Director

146 Clifford St • Providence, RI 02903  
401-331-0131 • [www.rilisc.org](http://www.rilisc.org)

## Mastroianni, Tina

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**From:** Randall Rose <rrose@pobox.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:18 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Source of Income Ordinance

I support the "Source of Income" ordinance which is under consideration in today's Ordinance Committee hearing. It prohibits housing discrimination against people who receive public assistance and are able to pay their rent.

The ordinance includes an important exception for owner-occupied buildings that have 3 units or fewer, which would not be subject to this ordinance.

Discrimination against people rising out of poverty is harmful, and increases other forms of discrimination that harm most residents of Providence.

Randall Rose  
20 Lewis St., Providence

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Bethany Caliaro <bethany.caliaro@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:21 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Stop Source of Income Discrimination

Hello Council Members,

My name is Bethany Caliaro, I live in the West End of Providence and would like you all to consider supporting our community by endorsing and passing the ordinance in todays meeting that seeks to end Source of Income Discrimination. This is important to me because I would like to see housing become more affordable and attainable for my unhoused neighbors.

Thank you,

--

**Bethany Caliaro**  
General Manager & Beverage Director  
Oberlin Restaurant  
(678)-592-6252

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Kevin Czapiewski <kevinczap@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:31 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward4; Ward13  
**Subject:** End Source of Income Discrimination

Dear Mr. Selleck and whom it may concern,

I'm writing to voice my support for Ordinance 23686: Source of Income being heard today. I live in Mount Pleasant and we just had a big snowfall last night. As winter starts to gear up and the pandemic, with all its economic fallout, stretches on it is more important than ever to make sure people have shelter. At the very least, if someone is able to pay for housing they must be able to access it no matter what. I hope that my councilmembers and their colleagues will vote to pass this ordinance.

Thank you very much,  
K. Czapiewski

## Mastroianni, Tina

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**From:** Laurel Leake <laurelleake@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:18 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Subject:** Vote YES to end source of income discrimination!

Hello,

My name is Laurel Leake, and I'm a resident of Providence on Slater Ave, and I'm writing in favor of the ordinance to stop source of income discrimination.

This winter, as our city is still rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic and covered in freezing snow, it's more vital than ever before to ensure that everyone can access safe housing. It's no exaggeration to say that this could save lives!

I support this ordinance and ask that the committee use their votes to close this dangerous loophole and help make safe housing possible for all our neighbors across Providence.

Thank you,  
Laurel Leake

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Kate Schapira <kjschapira@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:13 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Ending source of income discrimination

Dear City Council Committee on Ordinances:

I live in Ward 13. I would like more of my neighbors to be safely housed, and I urge you to take a step in addressing Providence's housing crisis by voting yes on this ordinance to end source of income discrimination.

Sincerely,  
Kate Schapira  
4 Brighton St  
Providence, RI 02909

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Emma B <emmabouton703@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 3:08 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City; Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Support for 23686 : Source of Income Ordinance

Dear City Council Committee on Ordinance,

My name is Emma, I am a resident in Providence, and I am writing to voice my support for the Source of Income Ordinance. Housing is a basic human right, and it is necessary that our city eliminates source of income discrimination in housing and gives people a fairer shot at finding a place to live. I urge you all to support this ordinance with your vote.

Sincerely,  
Emma Bouton

**Mastroianni, Tina**

---

**From:** Tristan Brooks Munchel <tbmunchel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 3:15 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City; Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Housing/Income Ordinance

Hello to the clerk and the members of the ordinance committee,

I live at 225 Knight Street, in Ward 13, and I'm just writing to express my support for Item 11 on tonight's committee agenda. I think source-of-income is an unfair basis on which to deny people housing, and I support removing it from city law. It's important to make housing as available as possible to poor folks, not just people who want to live in a luxury renovated Citizens Bank.

Thanks for your time!  
Tristan Munchel

**Mastroianni, Tina**

---

**From:** J Gan <janice.gan.y@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 3:32 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Subject:** Remove source of income discrimination

Hello,

I'm a Providence resident and wanted to add my voice in support of the ordinance removing source of income discrimination for housing. We all deserve affordable housing; let's not make it harder.

Regards,  
J.Y. Gan  
Ward 13

**Mastroianni, Tina**

---

**From:** cassie tharinger <cassiet@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:01 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City; Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Support for 23686 : Source of Income Ordinance

Dear City Clerk and Members of the Providence City Council Committee on Ordinances:

I am writing as a resident of Providence to express my support for Source of Income ordinance 23686, as one key part of the ongoing fight for equitable access to housing in our City.

I am grateful to Councilor Miller for introducing this critical ordinance as well as to my own representative Councilor Castillo for her joint-sponsorship of it, and I urge all committee members to support it!

Warmly,  
Cassie Tharinger

166 Congress Ave  
Providence RI

## Mastroianni, Tina

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**From:** Kristina Contreras Fox <kristina@rihomeless.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:11 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Submission of written testimony for PVD Ordinance Cmte  
**Attachments:** RI Coalition for the Homeless SOI PVD Ordinance 01.27.2021.pdf; Foster Forward SOI letter.pdf; Sojourner House SOI PVD Ordinance 01.27.2021.pdf; Southcoast Fair Housing CL prov ad 1.pdf; Southcoast Fair Housing cl prov ad 3.pdf; Southcoast Fair Housing CL prov ad 2.pdf; Southcoast Fair Housing Zillow prov ads.pdf; Southcoast Fair Housing 2021-1-27 Providence Ordinance Committee Written Testimony.docx

Good afternoon,

Attached are written testimonies for today's hearing in Providence City Council Ordinance Committee. All testimony, etc is in support of the ordinance proposed by Councilor Rachel Miller to ban discrimination in housing based on legal source of income

The testimony from Southcoast Fair Housing includes several attachments; all files include org name. In addition, there are letters from Sojourner House, Foster Forward, and the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless.

Thank you.

Warmly,  
Kristina

--

**Kristina Contreras Fox** (she/her/ella)  
Senior Policy Analyst  
RI Coalition for the Homeless  
1070 Main Street, Suite 304 Pawtucket RI 02860  
(p) 401.721.5685 ext 46  
(c) 401.424.1635  
[kristina@rihomeless.org](mailto:kristina@rihomeless.org)  
[www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org)

*Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world (Dolores Huerta)*

## Mastroianni, Tina

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**From:** Nina Wolff Landau <nina.wolfflandau@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 3:04 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City; Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Support for Ordinance 23686

Hello,

My name is Nina Wolff Landau and I live in Ward 13. I'm writing in support of Ordinance 23686 to end source of income discrimination in housing. This is a common sense and vital change to help facilitate housing access for people who are using a range of public benefits to secure housing. I urge you all to support this ordinance!

Thank you,  
Nina

Nina Wolff Landau  
Gender pronouns: she or they  
[nina.wolfflandau@gmail.com](mailto:nina.wolfflandau@gmail.com)  
(413) 230-7374

## Mastroianni, Tina

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**From:** Liza Burkin <liza@ourstreetspvd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 11:33 AM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Cc:** Ward5; Ward9; Ward11; Ward13; Ward4  
**Subject:** Please end source of income discrimination in Providence housing: support for Ordinance 23686

Dear members of the Ordinance Committee,

As I'm sure you recall, in January 2020 – shortly before COVID19 hit, plunging far too many of our neighbors into dire financial straits – you held a public hearing on the source of income discrimination ordinance. I attended that hearing, and heard from housing advocates, landlords, renters, people experiencing disabilities, experts, and state lawmakers – all of whom urged you to pass this vital legislation that will help more Providence residents who **can pay** for housing, secure it for themselves and their families.

Now, a year of deadly pandemic and economic crisis has gone by without protections for Providence residents from discrimination as they seek housing. While discussions of a statewide ordinance are underway, it is vital that Providence steps up to model this legislation and correct this gaping loophole in housing discrimination that every other state in New England besides New Hampshire has already closed.

Please be a champion for all Providence residents by passing this legislation out of Committee and recommending a full vote at the next Council meeting.

Thank you for all your hard work and all you do for our City,

Liza Burkin  
56 Wood Street

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Organizer  
Providence Streets Coalition  
(401) 400-1382

Facilitator  
Providence Coalition of Neighborhood Associations

pronouns: she/her

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Kurt Ostrow <ostrowk@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 8:20 AM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Subject:** Remove income discrimination

I'm writing in support of the ordinance that would remove income as a source of housing discrimination.

Thank you,  
kurt

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**Kurt Ostrow** [he, him, his]  
(609) 502-9878

**Mastroianni, Tina**

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**From:** Marena Davenport <marenadavenport@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 4:37 PM  
**To:** Clerk, City  
**Subject:** End Income Discrimination

Good Evening,

My name is Marena Davenport, a resident of Ward 13. I'm writing to you because I want my neighbors housed, and am full support of this new ordinance. In order to reflect the people you represent, we hope you will also vote in support of the Ordinance to end income discrimination. I look forward to seeing this passed.

Thank you for your time!