

# Outlaw Source of Income Discrimination

HB 1565/Ormsby & SB 5378/Miloscia

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## THE STATE SHOULD FOLLOW THE LEAD OF SEVERAL JURISDICTIONS IN WASHINGTON AND BAN DISCRIMINATION

In most of Washington, it's perfectly legal for landlords to refuse to rent to people with Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers. This discrimination results in huge disparities: seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities who pay their rent with legal sources of income (e.g. government and nonprofit subsidies) often face much longer home searches, or are unable to find an affordable home at all.

Discriminating against tenants who pay with housing vouchers is often a cover-up for racial discrimination. Source of income discrimination disproportionately affects African American communities, because a

disproportionately high percentage of voucher holders are African American. Other renters at high risk of discrimination, like seniors and people with disabilities are also impacted,

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solicited services or offers

halting opportunities for economic mobility and access to safe, healthy, affordable homes.

Already, several municipalities in Washington have

adopted laws prohibiting housing discrimination based on source of income (see sidebar). These protections are crucial to maximizing a family's ability to secure a safe and healthy home while paying with a housing subsidy or other legal source of income not coming from current employment.



After the building where Jon and Kelly Penfold lived was sold, the new owner began investigating the finances of his tenants. He wanted to know how many of them were using housing vouchers, and what kind. When the owner discovered that Jon was using a HOPWA

Voucher (Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids) to help pay their rent, he tried to make them move out - even though Jon and Kelly had always paid their rent on time. He posted four handwritten eviction notices on their door. They negotiated a way to stay in the building, but the landlord forced them to vacate their one-bedroom apartment with its full kitchen and move in to a studio with only a hotplate. Jon described the full kitchen as critical to maintaining his health. Despite this, the landlord continued to harass them, and Jon and Kelly felt they had no choice but to move.

## ASK THE LEGISLATURE

Pass legislation which prevents landlords from denying housing to tenants who pay their rent with Housing Choice vouchers, SSI, or state funded rental support.

### These laws work

Martha Galvez's 2011 study, "Defining Choice in the Housing Choice Voucher Program..." found that average neighborhood poverty rates for voucher holders were lower in areas with source of income discrimination laws in place.

### Spotlight on Clark County

"Something like 300 households in Clark County, including 90 families with children, qualified for private-market rental vouchers in the year after the new Housing Solutions Center opened its doors in March 2013 — but then couldn't find a landlord who'd accept them."

Housing Solutions Center in Vancouver found that "...even with vouchers in hand, only 56 percent of households found a landlord willing to rent to them."

*The Columbian*, July 27, 2014

### Some communities in Wa already protect these vulnerable tenants

- Bellevue
- Kirkland
- Redmond
- King County
- Seattle
- Vancouver

Washington should join these states: California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin.