

No one can be denied rental housing because of how they earn lawful income.

"The [housing] voucher was presented to me, but I had to turn it down because I could not find a property owner that would accept my income source.

When property owners discriminate against reliable and lawful income sources, it makes it harder for renters to find the housing they need to thrive in our community.

Source of Income

Source of income discrimination occurs when landlords refuse to rent a unit to a prospective tenant based on their source of income. In Columbus, over half of Housing Choice Voucher recipients are Black households, causing source of income discrimination to be a proxy for race discrimination. Source of Income protections make sure that people who are able to pay their rent, have a place where they're allowed to pay it; this helps provide more affordable housing options in diverse neighborhoods across the city.

What kind of income is protected?

Any lawful source of income that can be verified and substantiated. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Wages;
- Social security;
- Supplemental security income;
- Public or private sources;
- Assistance payments or subsidies;
- Rental vouchers;
- Child support;
- Spousal support; and
- Public assistance.

Who is protected?

Current tenants and prospective tenants.

What are housing operators prohibited from doing based on protected income?

Generally, operators may not knowingly do the following based on the source of income:

- Refuse to rent to a tenant;
- Provide different prices, terms, conditions, fees, facilities, or privileges;
- Attempt to discourage the rental to a tenant;
- Assist someone else to violate this ordinance;
- Coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with someone's rights under this law;
- Represent to a person that a dwelling unit is not available for inspection or rental when the dwelling unit in fact is available for inspection or rental; or
- Otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling unit to a tenant that, but for their source of income, would be eligible to rent real property.

How significant of a problem is finding a landlord to take a housing voucher?

On average, HUD researchers had to scan 39 apartment advertisements just to find 1 that would accept a voucher household. In Franklin County, 60% of large building owners refuse to accept rental assistance payments.

Are there limits on how operators calculate Housing Choice Voucher holders' income?

Yes. If landlords require tenants to have 3x income-to-rent (or other similar threshold or ratio), then the amount of a voucher must be subtracted from the rental amount before that calculation is performed.

What is the penalty for violating this ordinance?

Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

Where can residents report violations of this ordinance?

Complaints may be submitted to the Columbus Urban League for investigation.

When did this ordinance become effective?

July 1, 2021.

File a Complaint with the
Columbus Urban League at
740.580.3247, www.cul.org,
or fairhousing@cul.org



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