

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;

## **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.



Please contact Legal Aid if you need assistance. Visit [ColumbusLegalAid.org](https://ColumbusLegalAid.org) or call [614.241.2001](tel:614.241.2001)

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