



Proponent Testimony for Ohio House Bill 438

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Chairperson Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 438. My name is Amber Lewis, and I am a realtor and owner of New Era Real Estate Group. I've dedicated my career to advancing homeownership opportunities for Black Americans and other underserved communities.

The Legacy of Housing Discrimination

For decades, Black Americans have faced systemic barriers in the housing market. From redlining and discriminatory lending practices to bias in real estate transactions, these obstacles have denied generations of Black families the opportunity to own homes and build generational wealth. This exclusion has had long-term consequences, contributing significantly to the racial wealth gap we see today.

Even now, subtle forms of discrimination persist. Whether through unconscious bias or intentional actions, minority buyers often face additional hurdles when trying to purchase a home. Sellers may pass over offers based on names that sound “ethnic” or other personal characteristics disclosed prematurely in the process. This type of hidden discrimination undermines the principle of fair housing and perpetuates inequality.

The Role of HB 438

House Bill 438 is a much-needed step toward addressing these ongoing disparities. By prohibiting the disclosure of personal information—such as a buyer’s name, age, or race—before the terms of a contract are agreed upon, this legislation ensures that offers are evaluated based on merit alone.

Why This Matters

Owning a home is one of the most effective ways to build wealth and create financial security. For Black families, increasing homeownership rates is a key step in narrowing the racial wealth gap and providing greater opportunities for future generations.



As a Third-Generation Black Realtor, I've seen the transformative power of homeownership firsthand. I've worked with countless families who, through owning a home, have gained stability, built equity, and established a foundation for generational wealth. But I've also seen how bias—whether overt or hidden—can derail these dreams. House Bill 438 helps to ensure that every family, regardless of their race or background, has a fair shot at achieving the American dream of homeownership.

Conclusion

This bill is about fairness, equity, and justice. It's a step toward leveling the playing field in real estate and ensuring that the housing market is truly open to all. I commend the sponsors of HB 438 for their leadership on this issue, and I urge this committee to support the bill. Together, we can take an important step toward eliminating bias and promoting equal opportunity in Ohio's housing market.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Amber M. Lewis, MBA

Owner, New Era Real Estate Group