



**House Civil Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 438
December 17, 2024**

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of the substitute version of House Bill (HB) 438. Formed in 1910, Ohio REALTORS® is the state's largest professional trade organization, with approximately 36,000 members representing both residential and commercial practitioners, as well as auctioneers and appraisers.

Ohio REALTORS® takes housing discrimination very seriously. Fair housing laws and practices are critical for our communities and economy to thrive. Discrimination distorts the housing market and closes the door on the American dream of homeownership for qualified buyers.

Ohio REALTORS® appreciates the sponsors' efforts to protect Ohioans from housing discrimination and their willingness to work with us throughout the development of this legislation. Ohio REALTORS® is supportive of the proposal to have the Ohio Division of Real Estate create a standalone anti-housing discrimination document that must be signed by the seller prior to listing a property. This document will ensure sellers are fully aware of the details surrounding fair housing laws as well as the penalties associated with housing discrimination.

We continue to uphold our support for federal and state fair housing laws, as well as the REALTORS® Code of Ethics and accompanying policies, which require REALTORS® to offer equal professional services and refrain from engaging in any effort to discriminate. The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Code of Ethics, adopted in 1913, was one of the first codes of ethical duties adopted by any business group. Our Code requires REALTORS® to cooperate with each other in furtherance of our clients' best interests. Specifically, Article 10 of the Code states:

"REALTORS® shall not deny equal professional services to any person for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. REALTORS® shall not be parties to any plan or agreement to discriminate against a person or persons on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

REALTORS®, in their real estate employment practices, shall not discriminate against any person or persons on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity."

In order to become a REALTOR® and join the 1.5 million member National Association of REALTORS®, a person must swear to uphold this Code of Ethics. REALTORS® are committed to supporting ethical



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standards and protecting homebuyers' rights. Our members receive training in fair housing practices and include fair housing disclosure in purchase offers, the consumer guide to agency, as well as information on fair housing laws and “blockbusting” in residential brokerage agreements as a result of the passage of HB 466 (Reps. Schmidt and Brennan).

Additionally, in 2019, NAR adopted the Fair Housing Action Plan, abbreviated ACT!, to emphasize Accountability, Culture Change, and Training to advance fair housing in the industry. Through this initiative we raise awareness, deepen understanding, and hold ourselves accountable.¹

Ohio REALTORS® is committed to upholding ethical standards and fair housing laws in Ohio. We support the substitute bill’s efforts to better educate home sellers about federal and state fair housing laws. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the bill’s sponsors and other stakeholders to ensure the proposed policies can be effectively implemented and reduce discrimination in the homebuying process.

Sincerely,



Scott Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Ohio REALTORS®

¹ [Fair Housing Action Plan: ACT! \(nar.realtor\)](https://www.nar.realtor/fair-housing-action-plan-act/)