

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 547, which will limit the giving of low-income housing tax credits to projects that verify tenant immigration status. I am in favor of this bill as an Ohioian who has rented in the past and who owns rentals today. This bill is in the best interest of both landlords and lawful tenants, and I would like to explain why.

The argument for this is very similar to the strategy of “loss prevention” in the retail market. When retail businesses operate, they usually have to deal with some degree of their goods being stolen or damaged by people in their store. Some stores take the approach of limiting these losses by locking their most vulnerable stock, using security tags and gates, and hiring security and pressing charges. These measures add cost, but can save even more by preventing theft in the store. The opposite approach would be to not take these measures, which invariably leads to an increase in thefts as people who steal realize that they can steal without consequence. The store then faces such high losses that it must either cut expenses elsewhere or raise prices to compensate for the losses they are unwilling to fight against. Thus, the cost of the stolen products are paid for by the lawful, paying customers of the store being charged more. Shoplifting and theft hurt both the operators of the store as well as the customers who shop there.

In much the same way, tenants who do not pay rent and do damage to property without paying for it are stealing the service provided to them by the owners. The means of loss prevention are different for services like renting; evictions and security deposits help to make sure that an offense is limited, even if it can be an expensive and slow process to evict. When these costs are put on landlords by tenants who break their agreement, then get months of free living while an eviction is taking place, the landlord can only make their business viable by raising the monthly rate on other paying tenants to offset their loss. This again means that lawful people who uphold their agreements are effectively paying for the rent of people who fail to do so, which is unfair for them. This is *even more* true in the case where programs are subsidized by the state, where it is now taxpayers who will pay for the higher costs without receiving the service at all. It is therefore not only financially smarter, but a moral imperative that funds and credits help to reduce the cost of services by serving the people who lawfully use them and pay for them.

The reason this relates to citizenship and immigration status is that, while legal citizens sometimes break their leases, the legal consequences of them are usually easier to enforce because they can be identified and tracked when they break their agreements. If someone has no identification and decides to disappear after not paying three months of rent, the odds of any just reconciliation are slim. Obviously, it is much easier for someone to do this if they are not legally in the country, because they will not have any documentation to find them. Also consider this; if someone is willing to break the law to get into the country, what is stopping them from breaking a lease agreement? The fact of the matter is that it is easier for someone with no documentation to break a lease and not pay anything, which increases the costs of owners and will then increase the cost of rent for the responsible tenants and taxpayers subsidizing it. In a time where people are already feeling the pressure of rising costs of living, this bill will help to resist that trend by making sure loss is low. Vetting for responsible, lawful people is the responsible thing to do.