



Advocates for Basic
Legal Equality, Inc.

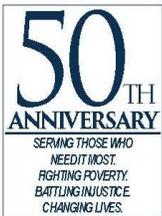
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Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Reem Subei, and I am an attorney with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (“ABLE”) in its Toledo office. ABLE is a non-profit regional law firm that provides legal assistance in civil matters to help low-income groups and individuals in 32 counties in western Ohio achieve self-reliance, equal justice, and economic opportunity. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 182, to prohibit discrimination in rental housing based on lawful source of income.

Housing discrimination impacts thousands of people in our community, with a disproportionate effect on families with children, people of color, and those with disabilities. I represent clients who cannot find housing because they are voucher holders. I have a client right now, a Black mother and grandmother taking care of her children and a grandchild. She struggled for several months and stayed in rats infested housing before she was able to find a safe and affordable home. Every time she tried to find a new place to live, she saw a notice saying “no vouchers accepted.” The denial of housing to voucher holders not only has a disparate impact on Black families and people with children, but in fact, there is evidence that landlords use voucher discrimination as a proxy for discrimination against Black families and people with children.

Several courts have issued decisions in favor of source of income discrimination. Some affirming that the Section 8 program is “not unduly burdensome.” (*See Montgomery County v. Glenmont Hills Associates Privacy World at Glenmont Metro Centre*, 402 Md. 250, 936 A.2d 325 (2007); *DiLiddo v. Oxford Street Realty, Inc.*, 450 Mass. 66, 876 N.E.2d 421 (2007).) Others explaining that “landlords remain free not to rent to voucher holders provided they do so on other legitimate, non-discriminatory grounds.” (*See Bourbeau v. Jonathan Woodner Co.*, 549 F. Supp. 78 (D.D.C. 2008).)

By expanding access to housing options, HB 182 would enable vulnerable groups and voucher recipients to live in higher opportunity neighborhoods and connect to vital community assets such as education, employment, transportation, and healthcare, thereby improving housing access and alleviating historical patterns of segregation and concentrations of poverty.

Ohio would be joining 17 states, the District of Columbia, and at least 96 other cities that have passed similar legislation. The Housing Choice Voucher program serves more than 2.2 million households and can enable low-income families with children to move to safe neighborhoods with high-quality schools. However, the program is only effective if private landlords are willing to accept the subsidies as a “source of income” for rent payments.

Allowing renters to be excluded from housing due to source of income perpetuates inequality and undermines federal and state fair housing laws that prohibit the discrimination of individuals and families based on race, sex, familial status, and disability. On behalf of my clients, I ask you to expand access to housing and not allow landlords to blanketly deny access to the very people that the federal government decided to support.

Thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony, and I urge you to support HB182.