

## Proposal to Amend the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance: Preventing Source of Income Discrimination

### The Problem:

- The Cook County Human Rights Ordinance (CCHRO) currently protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of a person's source of income (i.e., child support, social security). The CCHRO however specifically exempts from protection persons with "Section 8" Housing Choice Vouchers. Presently housing providers can and do deny qualified households solely because they have a Housing Choice Voucher. Studies have shown that housing providers often refuse to rent to voucher holders as a pretext for other types of illegal discrimination such as race, familial status, and disability.

### The Solution:

- The proposed ordinance amendment would include in the protection against source of income discrimination persons with Housing Choice Vouchers. The amendment would not force property owners to rent any or all of their units to any households using Housing Choice Vouchers. Property owners will still have the right to screen applicants.
- The City of Chicago and five other municipalities in Illinois, ten states, the District of Columbia, and eight counties around the country have laws that protect individuals from discrimination based upon the use of a Housing Choice Voucher.
- Voucher holders are some of the most scrutinized tenants and must meet the rigorous admission criteria of the voucher administrator as well as comply with lease provisions. Nearly 40% of voucher recipients are employed and more than 30% are seniors or persons with disabilities. There is absolutely no evidence that persons who use Housing Choice Vouchers to make their housing affordable perpetuate or increase crime in communities.
- Landlord participation in the voucher program is not unduly burdensome. Landlords only have to complete three simple forms. Payments made by the housing authority are made electronically. Units must pass a Housing Quality Standards inspection. Voucher recipients have to complete most of the paperwork.
- By supporting this amendment to the CCHRO, the last remaining type of source of income discrimination in Cook County can finally end.

For more information, contact Brendan Saunders, Open Communities, 847-501-4352  
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## List of Supporters:

US Congressman Danny Davis (7<sup>th</sup> District)  
US Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (9<sup>th</sup> District)  
State Representative Robyn Gabel (18<sup>th</sup> District)  
State Representative Elaine Nekritz (57<sup>th</sup> District)  
State Senator Daniel Biss (9<sup>th</sup> District)  
State Senator Patricia Watkins (5<sup>th</sup> District)  
Cook County Clerk David Orr  
Cook County Recorder of Deeds Karen Yarbrough  
Access Living  
Bethel New Life  
Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation  
Business and Professional People for the Public Interest  
Cabrini Green Legal Aid  
Centers for New Horizons, Inc.  
Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign  
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance  
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless  
Chicago Housing Authority  
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Chicago Rehab Network  
Chicago Urban League  
Claretian Associates  
Citizen Action Illinois  
Connections for the Homeless  
Disability Resource Action Committee  
Evanston NAACP  
Ford Heights Community Service Organization  
Garfield Park Community Council  
Healthcare Alternative Systems (HAS)  
HOPE Fair Housing Center  
Housing Action Illinois  
Housing Authority of the County of Cook  
Housing Choice Partners  
Housing Opportunity Development Corporation  
Housing Options for Women (HOW)  
Illinois Housing Council

Independent Voters of Illinois/Independent Precinct Organization  
Jane Addams Senior Caucus  
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs  
Jobs With Justice  
John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic  
Kenwood Oakland Community Organization  
Kingdom Community  
La Casa Norte  
Lakeside Community Development Corporation  
Latin United Community Housing Association (LUCHA)  
Latino Policy Forum  
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing  
League of Women Voters of Cook County  
Logan Square Neighborhood Association  
Metropolitan Family Services  
Metropolitan Tenants Organization  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
New Directions for Change  
Northwest Side Housing Center  
Oak Park Housing Authority  
Open Communities  
Progress Center for Independent Living  
Protestants for the Common Good  
Respond Now  
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
SEIU Local 73  
South Suburban Housing Center  
South Suburban PADS  
Spanish Coalition for Housing  
Supportive Housing Providers Association  
Target Area Development Corporation  
United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations  
West Suburban PADS  
Woodstock Institute

# FAQ's About Source of Income Protection

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## *How would the County amendment impact landlords?*

- **Landlords will only be obligated to *consider* renting to HCV holders, meaning landlords cannot refuse to rent, impose different terms or conditions, use different advertisements or other communications, or otherwise treat HCV holders differently from tenants without vouchers.**
- SOI protection would **NOT** force a landlord to participate if the tenant does not meet the landlord's typical requirements. For instance, the landlord can deny tenancy for insufficient credit rating or a bad landlord reference, as long as the criteria are applied equally to all renters.
- The amendment would not control rent rates. Landlords can charge whatever rent the market will bear.

## *Who are Cook County's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) holders?*

- Only 5% of tenants in Suburban Cook County have housing choice vouchers.
- The majority of voucher holders are families with children, followed by people with disabilities, the elderly, and veterans.
- The Housing Authority screens voucher holders, and landlords may do so as well, ensuring that these tenants are prepared to meet the obligations of tenancy.

## *How does the HCV program work?*

- After tenants pass the Housing Authority's screening, they are responsible for finding and securing housing in the private market.
- Once the landlord approves the tenant and fills out the Request for Tenancy Approval, the Housing Authority is alerted when the tenant submits the RTA. Next, an inspection is scheduled.
- All units must pass a Housing Quality Inspection; for example, the Housing Authority of Cook County has a contract with a private company that inspects units in as little as three days after the processing of the required paperwork. Once the unit passes inspection, rent is negotiated, and then the landlord and tenant can set a move-in date.
- Required paperwork includes the lease (terms of which the landlord establishes and the tenant agrees to, as in a typical lease arrangement) and the housing assistance payment contract (a contract between the landlord and housing authority which runs concurrently with the lease).
- Landlords can receive direct deposit of the housing authority's rent portion, and the tenant pays the remainder of the rent on the schedule agreed upon by the landlord and tenant.
- If a tenant fails to comply with the lease terms, a landlord has the right to file an eviction action.
- At the end of the lease, the contract is either renewed or ended, just like a typical market lease.

## *What other jurisdictions currently have this type of protection?*

- Currently, City of Chicago, 5 other IL municipalities, 8 counties, and 10 states already protects voucher holders.

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