



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

March 12, 2019

Chairman Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

Re: H5137 -- Fair Housing Practices Act (Support)

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the Committee,

As Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission, I write to you today in full support of House Bill 5137 (H5137).

Impaneled in 1963, the Providence Human Relations Commission works to protect and expand residents' rights to fair housing, education, employment, credit and public accommodations, free from discrimination. As it stands today, Rhode Island's Fair Housing Practices Act does not protect residents from source of income discrimination, allowing landlords to reject prospective tenants even when they can afford posted rent. This is of particular issue to the Providence Human Relations Commission, as Providence is home to the highest number of voucher-assisted households in the state, and, tenants who rely on lawful non-employment income in Providence are disproportionately disabled, elderly, families with children, and of color.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight this last point. Our history is one where federally-endorsed redlining and racial steering practices have decimated communities of color, and especially denied Black families the opportunity to build generational wealth. **Source of income discrimination penalizes households still reeling from the effects of these policies, reinforcing racialized patterns of homelessness, poverty and housing segregation. It further penalizes low-income households for being low-income, and disproportionately affects already marginalized communities.**

H5137 stands to change these circumstances by codifying protections for households paying all or part of their rental expenses with income derived from child support, alimony, social security, supplemental security income, medical or veteran assistance benefits, and subsidy programs such as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. The Providence Human Relations Commission is proud to be working with Mayor Elorza to back protections against source of income discrimination at the municipal level, and urges members of the Committee to do the same statewide by passing H5137. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sol Taubin", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sol Taubin
Executive Director
Providence Human Relations Commission