



April 5, 2021

Chair Becker-Finn
House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
559 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155
Via email

Re: HF1030 - Source of Income Protections/Prohibition of Rental Assistance Discrimination

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

Thank you for an opportunity to offer comment on HF 1030, which includes protection against rental assistance discrimination and increases choice and access to homes for Minnesotans. We urge your support for HF 1030, which clarifies that housing discrimination based on a person's source of income is illegal and provides resources for appropriate enforcement; we also urge that enforcement needs be fully and sustainably funded.

Rental assistance, including Housing Choice Vouchers, are crucial forms of assistance for vulnerable households. Yet, the majority of people eligible for this form of assistance do not receive the benefit they are entitled to; residents wait years just to get on a waiting list for vouchers, then years to get a voucher. After receiving the voucher they then need to find a landlord to accept this direct rent payment. If landlords can discriminate against people for having vouchers, under-resourced families are denied the opportunity to find safe, stable, and affordable homes.

Prohibiting rental assistance discrimination is a critical race equity issue. In Minnesota, 44% of the heads of households with voucher assistance identified as Black or African American, according to data for Minnesota HUD voucher-funded programs from October 2019 through January 2021. For vouchers administered by the Metro HRA, covering Anoka, Carver, and suburban Hennepin and Ramsey counties, the percent of voucher holders who identify as Black or African American is even higher, at 65%.

It is no accident that Black, Indigenous, and people of color heads of households are those who most need rental assistance to ensure housing stability. The Report to the legislature of the House Select Committee on Racial Justice, dated December 22, 2020, states, "The racial wealth gap is not an accident, but rather the consequence of decades of racial inequality that created barriers to wealth accumulation." The same Report describes that the disparity in median income is impacted by the wage gap; compared to White Minnesotans, Asian people earn 94 cents on the dollar, Black people earn 71 cents, Latinx people earn 70 cents, and Indigenous people earn 68 cents. Failure to amend the Minnesota Human Rights Act, by clarifying that housing assistance programs are covered by source of income protections, will continue to **worsen** harm to Minnesotans who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).



Studies have shown that source of income protections decrease discrimination against individuals and families using a voucher. Research also suggests that families with federal vouchers, many of whom have waited years for assistance they have long been eligible for, have greater success placing their vouchers and moving out of homelessness in jurisdictions with source of income laws.

With a long-needed increase in vouchers recently authorized by the American Rescue Plan, ensuring these vouchers can be fully put to use supporting housing stability for families and individuals is critical to ensure housing stability for Minneostans.

Thank you for your consideration and do not hesitate to reach out if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Glidden'.

Elizabeth Glidden
Deputy Executive Director
Minnesota Housing Partnership

Shana Tomenes
Attorney at Law
Equal
Housing Justice Center