

January 5, 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of the Statewide Source of Income Coalition, organized in 2016, we write to you in full support of amending the New York State Human Rights Law and expanding the protected classes to include "Lawful Source of Income." This amendment would extend legal protections to individuals using sources other than employment to cover housing costs, including, but not limited to, Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, unemployment insurance, disability, child support, retirement pensions, alimony, and veterans benefits.

We encourage you to make this a policy priority in the upcoming legislative session. By establishing a statewide source of income protection, and equipping state and local agencies with resources for enforcement, you will continue to be a champion for our elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, domestic violence survivors, homeless individuals, children, ethnic and racial minorities, and veterans. Advocating for statewide source of income protections, which was initially included in the Women's Equality Bill then subsequently removed, will further illustrate the importance of addressing women's issues. A commitment of this magnitude will demonstrate that leaders in Albany are serious about tackling injustices against our most vulnerable, and we sincerely thank you for your leadership.

The Statewide Source of Income Coalition supports the SOI protections in bill ([S149](#)) introduced by Former State Senator Daniel Squadron amended to include uniform statewide exemptions that are consistent with current exemptions in the State Human Rights Law (i.e., owner-occupied two family or less). The Coalition would support the passage of a 2018 bill offering these protections.

Source of income discrimination is pervasive and it perpetuates much of the widespread residential segregation found throughout New York State.[\[1\]](#) Studies indicate that the success rate of Housing Choice Voucher holders in finding a decent home is significantly higher where local or state law protects against discrimination based on source of income.[\[2\]](#) Further, source of income discrimination has a disproportionate and adverse impact on African Americans, Latinos, individuals with disabilities, and female-headed households; each of these groups rely heavily on the Housing Choice Voucher.[\[3\]](#)

Across the country, source of income legislation has been enacted in California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont and Wisconsin. Places in New York State including Buffalo, Hamburg, Nassau County, New York City, Rockland, Suffolk County, Syracuse, Westchester and West Seneca have statutes that include expanded protections related to how housing costs are covered. However, many New Yorkers still live in areas without source of income protection.

The current laws are not uniform in protections nor effectiveness, meaning it is now more important than ever to ensure that consistent, statewide protections are in place. The ability to expand lawful source of income protections statewide is particularly critical now, when demand for apartments affordable to low-income households is far higher than the supply. Nationally, only one in four eligible households receive rental assistance, and enacting source of income protection would promote true housing choice for New York's lowest income families.

We look forward to working with you on the implementation of this historic commitment.

Sincerely,



[1] John R. Logan and Brian Stults, “The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings from the 2010 Census” Census Brief prepared for Project US2010 (2011), <http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010> [last accessed 8/23/16].

[2] U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, “Study on Section 8 Voucher Success Rates (Nov. 2001), pg. 3-17; see also Lance Freeman and Yunjing Li, “Do Source of Income (SOI) Anti-Discrimination Laws Facilitate Access to Better Neighborhoods?” Paper presented at the Association of Public Policy and Management Fall Research Conference (Nov. 2012) (finding that source of income laws have a “modest impact on locational outcomes with the largest relationship observed for neighborhood poverty rates.”).

[3] African Americans comprise 15.6% of the New York State population, but comprise 38% of the State’s voucher holders. Latinos comprise 18.2% of the State’s population, but comprise 32% of the State’s voucher holders. Adults with disabilities comprise 13% of the New York State population, but comprise 34.5% of the voucher holders. Female-headed households comprise 20.7% of New York’s renter-occupied households, but comprise 34% of households receiving vouchers in New York.