



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2381 Re: Immigration Status of Tenants

Senate Judiciary Committee

May 10, 2022

Stephanie Geller, Deputy Director

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to thank Senator Quezada for sponsoring this bill as well as co-sponsors Cano, Murray, and Euer and voice its support for Senate Bill 2381. This bill would prohibit a landlord from asking about the immigration status of a tenant, prospective tenant, occupant, or prospective occupant of residential rental property.

The *Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act* provides all individuals in the state equal housing opportunities regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, military status as a veteran with an honorable discharge or an honorable or general administrative discharge, service member in the armed forces, country of ancestral origin, disability, age, familial status, or domestic violence history.

In addition, federal fair housing laws protect immigrants, refugees, and people of all religions from discrimination. It is illegal for a landlord to treat you differently because of your immigration status, national origin, or religion. Landlords cannot refuse to rent to you because you are an immigrant or refugee from a particular country or because of your religious faith; refuse to show you an apartment that is for rent because you are an immigrant or refugee from a particular country or because of your religious faith; refuse to rent to you because you are not from the United States; charge you more rent or a higher security deposit because of where you are from, or because of your religious faith; or require you to get a cosigner because you are an immigrant, refugee from a particular country or because of your religion.

Despite these laws, immigrant communities are particularly vulnerable to housing discrimination. Landlords across the country have been emboldened by anti-immigrant rhetoric to mistreat and exclude immigrant tenants. It is for this reason that we ask you to support this bill to strengthen current law and ensure that our neighbors are not discriminated against based on their immigration status.

Rhode Islanders already face many challenges to finding safe, healthy, and affordable homes. We urge you to pass this legislation and remove one of these barriers. Our recent *Policy Brief on Housing Instability and Homelessness Among Rhode Island Children* includes recommendations for addressing housing instability and homelessness among Rhode Island families, and addressing systemic racism and enforcing laws barring housing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, sexuality, gender identity, or lawful source of income is among these recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org