



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: House Bill 7680

House Judiciary Committee

March 17, 2022

Stephanie Geller, Deputy Director

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to thank Representative Giraldo for sponsoring this bill as well as co-sponsors Williams, Alzate, Morales, Batista, Cassar, Speakman, Felix, and Barros and voice its support for House Bill 7680. 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.