

Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families
in central northeast Ohio



www.communitylegalaid.org

Banning income discrimination promotes more inclusive cities

by Andrew Neuhauser, Managing Attorney

The image shows a collage of real estate advertisements from a newspaper. The most prominent ad is for 'THE CAMBRIDGE' at 676 Houston Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland, featuring a preview showing and listing amenities like an automatic elevator and carpeted corridors. Other ads include 'QUEBEC ARMS' with 1 and 2 bedroom options, and 'The Waywood' in Silver Spring, MD, described as a brand new luxury air conditioned apartment building. The ads are arranged in a grid-like fashion with various text sizes and bold headings.

NO SECTION 8

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't create the eviction crisis in our country. But it has made it worse.

It also has made it public. You can barely read headlines or turn on the news without seeing a story about evictions.

As a result, it's created a space for more community conversations, and even proposed legislation, around the eviction process and the rights of renters.

One such conversation is the issue of "income discrimination" for renters. "Income discrimination" means refusing to rent to somebody based on the type of income they have -- child support, disability benefits, subsidized housing vouchers, etc.

Simply put: think of a newspaper ad for an apartment that reads “No Section 8.”

In Ohio, it’s currently legal to discriminate against low-income renters this way. What source-of-income ordinances (like the [one recently passed by Akron City Council](#)) aim to do is bolster anti-discrimination laws and promote equality in urban development.

And this brings us to our key premise: banning income discrimination promotes more inclusive communities.

Banning income discrimination in rental housing has far-reaching positive impacts beyond the traditional Section 8 tenant. It gives protections to residents with disabilities, young adults who are aging out of the foster care system, veterans, and people who live with chronic diseases like HIV/AIDS. It has long-term benefits for children living in poverty by broadening the neighborhoods their families could rent in and therefore affecting their stability and access to a quality education. It would help the community take important steps toward desegregating neighborhoods by making quality housing stock more affordable to low-income families.

Above all, source-of-income legislation ensures that all renters, regardless of their socioeconomic level, are seen as human beings, each one just as worthy of safe and stable housing as anyone else. And this notion, of treating each other with dignity, respect, and worth, is the cornerstone of equity and inclusion.

This article is part of Legal Aid’s [“Big Ideas” series](#).

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