

March 9, 2016

The Honorable Mark Leno  
California State Senate  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 1053 (Leno) – Housing Opportunities Act – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Leno,

California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) is pleased to support Senate Bill 1053, your legislation to prohibit discrimination against renters who rely on housing subsidies.

Under the state Fair Employment and Housing Act, landlords cannot discriminate based on a person's source of income as well as their race, religion or sexual orientation. Sources of income could include welfare checks, and alimony and child support payments. Housing subsidies are another form of income.

Over 300,000 families in California receive a federally-funded Housing Choice Voucher, commonly referred to as “Section 8,” to help make rent affordable. Unfortunately, because such vouchers are not considered a protected source of income under FEHA, landlords are free to refuse to consider voucher holders as tenants. Such blanket refusals, often based on misguided stereotypes, frustrates the central aim of rental assistance programs and increases the harm and severity of California’s housing crisis.

According to a 2015 [story featured on KPCC](#), one in four people who receive rental vouchers in the city of Los Angeles lose them because they can't find someone to take them.

At least eleven other states—a diverse array including New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Oregon—have taken a stand for housing opportunity by clarifying that housing subsidies are a protected source of income. It is time for California to join their ranks.

Respectfully,



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