



February 11, 2021

Representative Raymond Hull, Chair  
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H-5257

Dear Chairman Hull and Members of the Committee

The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports passage of H-5257, which would prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person's receipt of a lawful source of income. According to the Rhode Island Standard of Need ("RISN") which we publish every two years, housing costs are the second largest expense (after child care) for a working family. The 2020 RISN shows that for a parent, toddler and school aged child, housing costs represent 23% of the family's \$57,600 basic needs expenses and child care accounts for 31%.

While lower income families are entitled to help paying for child care through the Child Care Assistance program, there is no entitlement to rental assistance. Thus, when a family receives rental assistance through the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) they have a "golden ticket" to be able to rent a home at an affordable price in a neighborhood of their choice. Yet many who receive the voucher, even after waiting months or years, are unable to use it because landlords are allowed to reject them as tenants simply because they are using the voucher. Discrimination based on source of income is as harmful to families and to our public well-being as is discrimination based on race, religion, marital status and other statuses that are protected by Rhode Island's Fair Housing law.

Rhode Island has a severe shortage of affordable and safe housing. Even before the pandemic, many working families were unable to find and afford a decent apartment in which to raise their children. The COVID crisis has exacerbated the pre-existing housing crisis, elevating the need to pass this legislation.

Rhode Island should join the other four New England states (Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and Vermont); ten other states; Washington, DC; and 76 counties and municipalities that have banned discrimination based on source of income.

Thank you for your attention to this testimony.