

SUPPORT HB1408 (Bourne)

Because where you live can lift you up or keep you down, Virginia MUST support efforts by lower-income families to move into areas of opportunity.

The Problem: Too many Virginians remain trapped in high poverty, low opportunity neighborhoods, isolated from good schools, job growth and healthy surroundings. Some of them have the means to rent homes in higher opportunity neighborhoods, but landlords often block their moves by refusing to accept their payment, whether it is social security benefits, a Section 8 voucher or other funding intended to help struggling families move forward.

The Solution: This sort of discrimination is illegal in thirteen states.ⁱ **Virginia should also make it illegal to refuse housing applications from people who pay with non-traditional funds.**

How can prohibiting discrimination based on income type help people move out of poverty?

- It can help people move to **better school districts**. For example, Hanover County, a high opportunity area with a high school graduation rate over 95%, is home to fewer than 300 families with Section 8 vouchers; over 2000 families with vouchers live in Richmond City where the graduation rate is only 77%.ⁱⁱ
- It can help people move to **safer, healthier neighborhoods**. At least one study of people who moved to high opportunity areas with vouchers found that their mental and physical health improved significantly. Evidence strongly suggested these improvements were due to how living in safe neighborhoods reduced stress.ⁱⁱⁱ
- It can help people **stay in safe, familiar communities** even if they use vouchers.
- A recent study showed that children who move from high poverty neighborhoods to areas with lower poverty and higher opportunity before they reached their teens are less likely to become single parents, more likely to go to college and likely to have higher earnings than children who grow up in high poverty neighborhoods.^{iv} In fact, the results of the study indicate that the present value of extra lifetime

earnings accruing to a child who moves from a high poverty to a lower poverty neighborhood at age eight could be as high as \$99,000.^v

Will there be administrative burdens on landlords if they accept people with vouchers?

- **Landlords actually benefit** when they rent to tenants with Section 8 vouchers, as most of their rent is paid directly to the landlords (often by direct deposit) by the housing authority or non-profit agency administering the voucher.
- The few additional forms required by the Section 8 Program are easy to complete, and the required annual inspection is completely paid for by the federal government. Landlords whose properties fail inspection would not be penalized under this law.

ⁱ Conn. Gen. Stat. §46a-64c (1989); Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. Tit. 5, §4582 (1975); Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. Ch. 151B, §4 (1971); N.J. Stat. Ann. §10:5-4, -12(g)(2002); N.D. Cent. Code §14-02.4-01 and 14-02.5.07 (1999); Utah Code Ann. §57-21-5 (1989); Vt. Stat. Ann. Tit. 9, §4503 (1987); Cal. Gov. Code §1291 (2014); 6 Del. C. §4601 (2016); Minn. Stat. Ann. §363A.09(1990); Okla. Stat. tit. 25, §1452 (1991); Or. Rev. Stat. §659A.421 (2014); Wis. Stat. §106.50 (2017)

ⁱⁱ Virginia Department of Education 2017 data; HUD picture of subsidized housing 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sanbonmatsu, L., et. Al., "Moving to Opportunity Final Evaluation – Executive Summary" (October 2011); S. Popkin, T. Leventhal and G. Wiesmann, "Girls in the 'Hood: The Importance of Feeling Safe" (March 2008)

ⁱⁱⁱ "The Best and Worse Places to Grow Up", NY Times May 4, 2015 by Aisch, Buth, Bloch, Cox and Quealy, citing "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility" by Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren

^{iv} "The Best and Worse Places to Grow Up", NY Times May 4, 2015 by Aisch, Buth, Bloch, Cox and Quealy, citing "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility" by Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren

^v J. Wolfers, NY Times 5/4/2015 "Why the New Research on Mobility Matters: An Economist's View"



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Snapshot of voucher households in Virginia

46,300 households (113,200 people) in Virginia use a voucher to afford decent, privately owned housing.

Who do these vouchers go to in Virginia?

- 9% go to elderly people
- 22% go to disabled people
- 72% go to families with children

73% of the non-disabled, working age voucher households have at least one member working.

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Virginia Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet. August 9, 2017. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-10-14housing-factsheets_va.pdf

Organizations in support of prohibiting housing discrimination based upon a person's income type:

**Housing Opportunities Made Equal
Virginia Association of Community Services Boards
Virginia Housing Alliance
Virginia First Cities
Virginia Poverty Law Center**