

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 19-H 5137
AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY – FAIR HOUSING PRACTICES
March 12, 2019**

The ACLU is firmly in support of H 5137, which would prevent landlords from denying a potential tenant's application on the basis of their source of income.

Research conducted by Southcoast Fair Housing on source-of-income discrimination asks a pivotal question: "A dollar is a dollar, no matter where it comes from – right?" As instinctive as the notion may be that income itself is free from bias, Rhode Islanders with non-traditional income sources find themselves at a disadvantage in a housing market that prioritizes pay stubs over Social Security or rental assistance vouchers.

For this reason, we believe it is time to protect these residents, many of whom are already members of low-income and marginalized communities, from enduring further difficulties in their search for safe and healthy housing. The financial qualification of a tenant should be limited to whether they can reliably and consistently make rent or not, not whether their rent money is coming from a private employer or from subsidy programs.

For these reasons, the ACLU urges swift consideration and passage of this bill.