



# Commission on Human Rights

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CONTACT: Claire Gross, [press@cchr.nyc.gov](mailto:press@cchr.nyc.gov)

## NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO TACKLE ILLEGAL SOURCE OF INCOME DISCRIMINATION

*“Vouchers Pay. Discrimination Doesn’t.” Campaign will Educate New Yorkers on Source of Income Discrimination.*

**NEW YORK** – The New York City Commission on Human Rights (the Commission) is launching a public education campaign about source of income discrimination. This is when housing providers deny housing to an applicant or mistreat a tenant because they use a rental subsidy, commonly referred to as a voucher. These practices violate the New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), one of the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation.

“Strengthening access to housing is a top priority for this Administration and that includes preventing source of income discrimination,” said **City Hall Chief Counsel Brendan McGuire**. “I applaud The New York City Commission on Human Rights on their continued work addressing and preventing source of income discrimination. New York City is proud to have one of the most expansive and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in the nation which offers a wealth of protections to New Yorkers from all walks of life. It is crucial that New Yorkers know that their city protects their right to live free from bias and discrimination.”

“Empowering New Yorkers who have housing vouchers is crucial to reducing homelessness and advancing fair housing,” said **Chief Housing Officer Jessica Katz**. “This public education campaign is vital to make sure all New Yorkers know that source of income discrimination is against the law.”

“Education is a valuable tool when combatting discrimination,” said **Annabel Palma Commissioner and Chair of the NYC Commission on Human Rights**. “Whether it’s renting a unit to a voucher holder or reporting a violation, we can all do our part to care for one another. Everyone deserves a chance to live, work, and thrive in this great city.”

Vouchers offer a path to stability. The “Vouchers Pay. Discrimination Doesn’t.” campaign will educate tenants, housing applicants and providers about their rights and responsibilities under the NYCHRL and will encourage New Yorkers to report suspected violations to the Commission.

Starting in April, New Yorkers will see “Vouchers Pay. Discrimination Doesn’t.” ads and posters citywide including:

- Social media including [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#);
- Local delis and bodegas
- City bus shelters and Link NYC kiosks
- Taxi TV
- Community and ethnic media.

Preventing discrimination is essential. The Commission prioritizes education and raising awareness in order to root out discrimination. Throughout the year, the Commission conducts trainings and organizes events across the five boroughs. Staff present information on the NYCHRL to other city agencies, small and large businesses, attorneys, and community organizations. Trainings provide important information about the Law, advise on how to comply, and discuss what to do if the Law has been violated. Throughout April the Commission will co-host events spotlighting housing discrimination:

- 4/5: [Fair Housing Conference co-hosted with the NYS Division of Human Rights](#)
- 4/25: Voucher discrimination education panel at York College, CUNY
- 4/26: [Webinar on source of income discrimination for brokers, landlords, and real estate agents](#)
- 4/29: Fair Housing Community Celebration hosted by the Commission and sibling agencies in Queens.

Though education and prevention are top priorities, the Commission also protects New Yorkers when discrimination has caused them harm. The Commission is empowered to order monetary damages, civil penalties, and additional remedies such as rehiring, immediate housing, policy changes, and/or training.

In 2018, the Commission created a dedicated Source of Income Unit (SOI Unit) to supplement the voucher discrimination work done by the entire law enforcement staff. The SOI unit can instigate pre-complaint interventions to provide prompt relief from recent or continuing harm. Pre-complaint interventions may result in immediate housing for voucher holders who were denied housing and are currently or at the risk of becoming unhoused.

Testing is another long-standing and effective tool used to determine whether there is discrimination in housing. One example of testing is when two applicants—one voucher holder and one non-voucher holder—apply for a unit to see if they are treated the same. Through testing the Commission can initiate a case without a member of the public reporting an inquiry.

For many New Yorkers, vouchers are key to stable housing and housing is crucial for communities to thrive.

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The New York City Commission on Human Rights enforces the New York City Human Rights Law—one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the nation. The Law includes 27 protected classes in housing, employment, and public accommodations. If you have witnessed or experienced discrimination, contact the Commission at 212-416-0197 or [www.nyc.gov/reportdiscrimination](http://www.nyc.gov/reportdiscrimination)