



Tenants are Protected from Discrimination Based on Source of Income

❖ Read this *only* if you live in the state of Washington.

Should I read this?

Yes, if you are a tenant or looking to rent a place to live. It is illegal for landlords in Washington state to discriminate against tenants and would-be tenants based on your source of income.

What does “source of income” mean?

A landlord may not want to rent to you if your income is from public or charitable sources like:

- Federal, state, and local public benefits, such as Social Security, Veteran’s benefits, retirement, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or Aged, Blind and Disabled (ABD)
- Rent subsidies from federal, state, or local housing programs, such as the Section 8 voucher program, Share Aspire, or Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)
- Short-term rental assistance, for example from organizations like Catholic Community Services or Lutheran Community Services

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I am looking for a place to rent. How does this law protect me?

A landlord cannot:

- Refuse to rent to you because of the source of your income.
- Cannot charge you more rent than someone who does not get benefits.
- Tell you the unit is not available when it is.
- Advertise a property for rent only for tenants with certain types of income.

I am already renting a place. I just started getting public benefits. Does the law protect me?

Yes. Your landlord cannot:

- End your lease or evict you just because you now get benefits.
- Treat you differently than any tenant who does not get benefits, just because you are now getting benefits.

Does the law apply to all landlords?

It applies to all landlords as defined by the state [Residential Landlord Tenant Act \(RLTA\)](#). It does not apply in situations such as:

- Farmworkers living in employer-provided housing
- People getting housing in exchange for work
- People living in hotels or motels
- People who own their mobile home, but rent the lot.

❖ If a tenant is renting both the mobile home and the lot, this law **does** apply. The landlord cannot discriminate based on their source of income.

See [RCW 59.18.040](#) for the full list of who is not covered by the source of income law. And the source of income law itself is here: [RCW 59.18.255](#)

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Can a landlord still turn down my application for other reasons?

Yes. The landlord can refuse to rent to you if all of these are true:

- The property must pass inspection for you to keep your rental assistance.
- It will cost more than \$1,500 to make sure the property will pass that inspection.
- The landlord cannot get the money to make the improvements.

❖ [Tenant Screening: Your Rights](#) has more about your rights when applying for a rental.

I have a section 8 voucher and am applying for an apartment. The landlord requires me to have income 2 or 3 times more than the rent amount. Does the landlord count just my portion of the rent?

Yes. A landlord who uses the amount of your household income to decide whether to rent to you can include only the portion of rent you are responsible for in determining if your income is enough.

❖ **Example:** Maria applies for a unit renting for \$1,000/month. Maria's Section 8 Voucher will cover \$600 of the rent. The landlord requires all tenants to have a monthly income that is twice the rent amount. Before, Maria's income would have to be \$2,000 to qualify for the apartment. Under this law, the landlord must subtract the voucher amount (\$600) from the total rent (\$1,000) before calculating if Maria's income is enough. In this case, Maria's portion of the rent is \$400. So 2x Maria's portion of rent = \$800. Maria's monthly income only needs to be \$800 to qualify.

I think the landlord denied my rental application because of my income. What can I do?

You can take the landlord to court. If the judge agrees that the landlord illegally discriminated against you because of your source of income, you could win up to 4.5x (four and one-half times) the amount of the monthly rent, plus costs and attorney's fees.



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Can I get legal help?

- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819
- **Facing a legal issue in King County (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)?** Call **2-1-1** (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)?** Call the [CLEAR Hotline](#) at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over) with a legal issue outside of King County** can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111
- **Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired** callers can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

CLEAR and 2-1-1 will provide interpreters

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