

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT Assembly Bill A.10610 (Weprin)

As New York State's housing crisis deepens, the time to extend basic legal protections to millions of housing-vulnerable New Yorkers is now. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) offers its strong support for Assembly Bill A.10610, a bill to enhance the New York State Human Rights Law by outlawing source-of-income discrimination in housing.

For over four decades, NYLPI has fought to protect and expand civil rights for marginalized New Yorkers through litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy. Guided by the priorities of the communities we serve, NYLPI strives to ensure fair access to affordable housing, including by combating discrimination based on lawful source of income.

By outlawing source-of-income discrimination, the Assembly can play a key role in preventing homelessness, as well as discrimination, for the countless New Yorkers who use government benefits and other non-wage earnings to pay their rent. Voucher programs promise renters with low income the opportunity to access safe, affordable housing in diverse neighborhoods, but many voucher holders face limited housing options—and an increased risk of homelessness--because of landlords who rely on unfounded prejudices to deny them housing.¹

While New York City and some other localities already prohibit source-of-income discrimination, approximately one-third of New Yorkers live in places that offer no protection.² If enacted, A.10610 would bridge this critical gap for tens of thousands of voucher holders across New York State.³

Assembly Bill A.10610's robust protections against source-of-income discrimination are especially critical for persons with disabilities, veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families with children, who disproportionately rely on voucher programs for housing stability.⁴ As Governor Cuomo observed, access to safe, affordable housing is the number one barrier survivors of domestic violence face, and this bill would help survivors and their families find new homes.⁵

Assembly Bill A.10610 makes sense for New York because laws prohibiting source-of-income discrimination work. Studies associate laws like A.10610 with a 4–11% increase in voucher utilization, as well as increased access to desirable neighborhoods.⁶ This common-sense addition to the Human Rights Law could prevent homelessness for thousands of New York families, simply by allowing them to use a benefit to which they are already entitled.

¹ A recent study found no evidence that the addition of voucher holders increases neighborhood crime rates. <http://furmancenter.org/files/publications/FurmanCenter-HousingVoucherUseCrime.pdf>.

² NYLPI analysis of United States Census Bureau data. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts>.

³ NYLPI analysis of HUD data. <http://pic.hud.gov/pic/RCRPublic/rcrmain.asp>

⁴ 85% of households in New York using federal rental assistance include children or people who are elderly or have disabilities. <http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/4-13-11housing-NY.pdf>.

⁵ <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-actions-support-fair-housing-all>.

⁶ http://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/freeman_impactlaws_assistedhousingrcr06.pdf.

Assembly Bill A.10610 represents a crucial step in ensuring fair housing for all New Yorkers. It is time for New York to join eleven states and the District of Columbia in prohibiting discrimination based on lawful source of income.⁷ NYLPI urges the Assembly to pass A.10610 and make source-of-income discrimination illegal across New York.

For more information on NYLPI's support for A.10610, please contact Antony Gemmell at agemmell@nylpi.org or 212-336-9308.

⁷ <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/AppendixB.pdf>.