

## NEWS RELEASE

### **New Oakland County Fair Housing Initiative proposed to prevent source of income housing discrimination**

*Commissioners unveil legislative package to support communities, residents and landlords to increase access to affordable housing*

**April 20, 2021, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI.** – This morning, local county commissioners and fair housing leaders unveiled the proposed Oakland County Fair Housing Initiative at the Ferndale Housing Commission. The initiative, which is launching during National Fair Housing Month, aims to prevent source of income (SOI) housing discrimination and eliminate other barriers to fair housing. To address this issue, commissioners will be introducing a package of resolutions at the full Board of Commissioners meeting on April 29.

“Access to affordable housing is essential to a resilient economy,” Board Chairman **David T. Woodward** (D-Royal Oak) said. “Ending source of income housing discrimination is necessary to increase access to affordable housing. These innovative ideas are the beginning of steps we can take together to remove barriers to affordable housing and increase opportunities for everyone.”

SOI discrimination prevents residents who participate in the federally funded housing choice voucher program, or other forms of rental assistance, from accessing housing. The voucher program in particular is the federal government’s program for assisting low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments, in the private market. When those who participate in the program are discriminated against, their access to suitable housing is unfairly limited.

“Preventing source of income discrimination is a common-sense issue that is also a just cause,” Commissioner **Charlie Cavell** (D-Ferndale) said. “By addressing issues with access to housing, we’re working with landlords, tenants and local governments to make sure everyone is part of the solution.”

More than a dozen states, plus the District of Columbia, have enacted laws and/or ordinances with the inclusion of SOI as a protected class. In Michigan, cities such as Ann Arbor, Lansing, East Lansing,

Kentwood, Kalamazoo and Royal Oak have passed laws and/or ordinances prohibiting SOI discrimination.

“I have seen countless individuals and families turned down for housing - who were otherwise qualified tenants – only because they needed a voucher or rental subsidy to supplement their rental payments,” Dana Paglia-King, short term housing programs supervisor for the Community Housing Network, said. “But I’ve also seen the successes, and the Board’s efforts will help create more of those victories in our community.”

“By joining 18 states and over 90 local governments that already have Source of Income Discrimination Laws, Oakland County will immediately expand access to existing affordable housing,” Dan Martin, Ferndale Housing Commission board member, said. “We are facing an affordable housing crisis that needs immediate relief. If we are serious about equity, we must provide equal opportunity in housing, including housing options for families who use rental assistance to help them cover a portion of their rent.”

The initiative includes a proposed legislative package, which will include resolutions to:

- Call on all Oakland County cities, villages and townships to adopt local policies to prohibit SOI housing discrimination; partner with a housing advocate organization to develop a model policy; and educate local elected leaders about the importance of addressing this policy issue
- Develop a countywide online map, in collaboration with community and county partners, which highlights communities that have adopted local policies banning SOI housing discrimination
- Create the Oakland County Fair Housing Fund that would provide up to \$1 million in grants to local cities, villages and townships for fair housing education, enforcement of a SOI housing discrimination policy, and/or other local fair housing efforts
- Create the Oakland County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund
- Support state action to adopt a statewide ban SOI housing discrimination

“It’s not worthwhile to have programs in place to assist residents with affordable housing, but to sit by as we see landlords discriminate against people using those programs,” Commissioner **Yolanda Charles** (D-Southfield) said. “The proposed legislative package, including a map of communities that have joined the fight, will get us one step closer to getting our residents the resources they need to lead safe and healthy lives.”

“Oakland County will do everything it can to promote fair housing practices, but we’re also calling on support from our state leaders,” Commissioner **Angela Powell** (D-Pontiac) said. “Because prejudicial

practices are common among some landlords, leaders at all levels must work together to simply protect our citizens' rights against discrimination."

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