



# Housing Justice Act (HB 2017)

January 2022

## The problem

All of us, no matter our race, income, or past, should have access to a safe and healthy home, and have a choice about where we pursue our careers, get an education, build a family, or work through recovery. But today, landlords are allowed to deny our rental applications based on a past conviction or arrest; labels that stay with us for the rest of our lives. While we hold jobs, care for our loved ones, go to school, and live our lives, many of us have no choice but to live in unsafe housing with no way to build a rental history like our neighbors. Landlords, background check companies, and the media justify denying us opportunities by repeating false stereotypes that vilify us in the eyes of our community. Some landlords even discriminate against Black and brown renters by using conviction history as a proxy for race.

## The solution

Washingtonians with conviction histories live and participate in all of our communities. If finding a quality home was accessible, the positive ripple effect would increase our quality of life, and boost our community as a whole. If we come together across our differences of race, zip codes, incomes, and backgrounds, we can rewrite the rules to ensure all of us have the opportunity to live in a safe and healthy home in the same neighborhoods where we work, play, and care for our loved ones.

The Housing Justice Act (HB 2017) will make a real and meaningful difference in addressing housing disparities and ensuring that everyone in our community has access to safe, stable housing.

## Key elements of the bill

- A landlord or any third-party website may not have an advertisement or policy that automatically excludes a person with an arrest or conviction record from rental housing.
- A landlord cannot require disclosure or inquire about the arrest record or conviction record of any prospective tenant, tenant, or member of the tenant's household.
- The only time a landlord can use criminal history is if someone is on a registry and the landlord has a substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason.
- A landlord or third party may not deny tenancy or take an adverse action against anyone with an arrest or conviction that occurred under the age of 25.
- Public Housing Agencies will be able to use criminal history where it is mandatory by federal law, such as sex registry and manufacturing methamphetamine.
- Any violation of this bill is protected by the Consumer Protection Act and those who are discriminated against could seek relief through the Attorney General's office.
- Exempts ADUs if owner occupied in one of the units and also for roommate situations.

