

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/senate-bill-349-attack-civil-rights-protections>

Campaign and Advocacy

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Have you shown up to rent an apartment, but were turned away because of the color of your skin? Or because you have a disability? The law might not be on your side anymore. Discrimination in access to housing is unlawful. If a landlord is found guilty of discriminating against housing applicants or tenants, Ohio law ensures he or she will face stiff financial penalties. However, [Senate Bill 349](#), proposed by Ohio Senator Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), seeks to relieve certain landlords found guilty of bias towards a persons race, color, religion, sex, military status, national origin, disability, age, or ancestry and also prevents funding for the states fair housing agency. This bill allows for exceptions from the housing provisions of an Ohio civil rights law instead of securing and strengthening them. Seitzs bill, co-sponsored by Senators Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) and John Eklund (R-Munson Township), modifies Ohio law in order to protect certain landlords from fines and attorney fees that the bill classifies as punitive. However, these punitive damages, collected from landlords found guilty of discriminatory actions, help fund the work of Ohios fair housing agencies. [In a recent letter sent to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission executive director G. Michael Payton](#), Lynn Grosso of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development expresses several concerns with the outcomes the bill would have on funding and effectiveness. Jim McCarthy, president and CEO of Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, echoes Grossos warning, noting that the bill would reduce the commissions funding by more than a million dollars. Additionally, Hilary Mason King, executive director of the Housing Research and Advocacy Center, [describes the bills potential impact](#) as a severe injury for families, people with disabilities and everyone else who is brave enough to confront housing discrimination. Senator Seitz [justifies the bill](#) as necessary to prevent some of the egregious attorney fees that arise for the defendants of housing discrimination cases, according to a letter sent to other lawmakers in early June. The proposed amendments to the civil rights law would financially protect landlords who own no more than three single-family residential dwellings. However, Senate Bill 349 would harm a large population often subjected to discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, military status, national origin, disability, age, or ancestry. These individuals and families that deserve equal treatment would instead have to rely upon a federal investigation rather than one from their own state. The ACLU of Ohio strongly believes that the state should protect and fortify civil rights, while Senate Bill 349 strives to chisel away at the current laws so important to liberty for all.

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