

ORGANIZATION LETTERHEAD/NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

DATE

The Honorable Mark Stone
Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary
1020 N Street, Room 104
Sacramento, CA 94814

RE: Support – AB 291 (Chiu): Protecting Immigrant Tenants

Dear Assemblymember Stone:

I am/we are writing to express support for AB 291, which would protect immigrant tenants from intimidation and retaliation by landlords. This bill is vitally important given current dangers facing both documented and undocumented immigrant Californians.

[Org mission + concern about this issue]

In the course of business, landlords learn a lot about tenants: their social security numbers, the languages they speak, the times they're at home, and the identities of their families and friends. Tenants have virtually no legal protections against misuse of this information. While most landlords are scrupulous, a minority regularly threaten to report tenants to immigration authorities, either to retaliate against those who raise habitability and repair issues, or to circumvent the statutory eviction process.

Under AB 291, tenants would gain new protections from discrimination based on immigration status. These include a ban on questions about immigration status in housing-related cases, and a prohibition on attorney threats to report tenants to immigration authorities. Landlords would also be barred from threatening to report tenants, or actually disclosing information about tenants' citizenship status, to the authorities. Landlords who do report their tenants to immigration authorities could be sued for damages and referred for potential criminal prosecution. The bill also codifies an existing defense to evictions on the basis of immigration status. Versions of many of these protections already exist in employment law, and it only makes sense to extend them to landlord-tenant law. The bill provides necessary exemptions to these provisions to safeguard landlords who are complying with federal law.

AB 291 enacts commonsense protections that respond directly to the abuses most commonly observed by tenant advocates. These protections are especially necessary given that most undocumented Californians are tenants. **I/we** support the passage of AB 291 for these reasons.

Sincerely,

Name

Signature