

February 23, 2024

Dear Delegate Ruff,

Please accept this written testimony in favor of HB100.

Removing a buyer's name from a residential contract of sale can be a prudent measure to safeguard against fair housing discrimination. Fair housing laws are in place to ensure that all individuals have equal access to housing opportunities regardless of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. By eliminating the buyer's name from the contract, the transaction becomes blind to personal identifiers, thus promoting fairness and equality in the housing market.

Here are several compelling arguments in favor of this practice:

1. **Preventing Bias:** When a buyer's name is included in a contract, it opens the door for unconscious biases to influence the transaction process. Sellers or real estate agents may inadvertently discriminate against certain individuals based on their names, which could be indicative of race, ethnicity, or national origin. Removing the buyer's name helps to mitigate the risk of such biases impacting the transaction.
2. **Promoting Equal Opportunity:** Fair housing laws are designed to ensure that everyone has equal access to housing opportunities. By anonymizing the buyer's identity in the contract, sellers and real estate professionals can focus solely on the merits of the offer and the qualifications of the buyer, without being swayed by irrelevant factors such as race or ethnicity.
3. **Enhancing Transparency:** Removing the buyer's name from the contract promotes transparency in the transaction process. It ensures that decisions regarding the sale of the property are based solely on objective criteria, such as the offer price, financing terms, and the buyer's ability to close the deal, rather than subjective considerations related to the buyer's identity.
4. **Legal Compliance:** Fair housing laws prohibit discrimination in housing transactions based on protected characteristics. By adopting practices that minimize the potential for discrimination, sellers and real estate professionals can ensure compliance with these laws and mitigate the risk of costly legal disputes or penalties.
5. **Creating a Level Playing Field:** Anonymizing the buyer's identity helps to level the playing field for all potential buyers. It ensures that individuals are evaluated based on their qualifications and financial capacity, rather than subjective factors over which they have no control, such as their name or background.

In conclusion, removing a buyer's name from a residential contract of sale is a proactive step toward promoting fairness, equality, and compliance with fair housing laws in the housing market. By focusing on objective criteria and eliminating opportunities for discrimination, real estate professionals can create a more inclusive and transparent transaction process that benefits buyers, sellers, and the community as a whole.

Thank you,

Kimberly Kepnes,
Bill Co-sponsor,
President,
Monument Sotheby's International Realty