

STATEMENT OF COLLABORATION
between ZILLOW GROUP and the NEW JERSEY DIVISION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The New Jersey Legislature created the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights (DCR) seventy-five years ago to enforce the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD) and to “prevent and eliminate discrimination” in the State of New Jersey in housing, employment, and places of public accommodation. N.J.S.A. 10:5-6. Zillow Group, Inc. (Zillow) is transforming how people buy, sell, rent and finance homes by creating seamless real estate transactions for today’s on-demand consumer. Zillow is committed to providing the millions of consumers that visit Zillow sites and apps every month with information and resources that promote equal opportunities in housing regardless of race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and other protected characteristics.

DCR and Zillow have a mutual interest in ensuring that advertising for real estate for rent or sale in New Jersey is free of statements that unlawfully discriminate on the basis of characteristics protected by the LAD, including source of lawful income (as discussed below). See N.J.S.A. 10:5-12(g)-(h). Between DCR’s role as the State agency charged with enforcing the LAD’s prohibition on housing discrimination and Zillow’s footprint as an industry leader in the housing market, they have the ability to effect important changes in New Jersey by working together. Accordingly, Zillow and DCR have agreed to use their shared expertise and resources to collaborate on a series of measures designed to promote fair housing through education on the protections guaranteed by the LAD and other product features to help prevent discriminatory advertisements from appearing on Zillow’s platforms.

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The LAD prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, and other protected characteristics. N.J.S.A. 10:5-12. The LAD also prohibits discrimination by property owners, real-estate agents, and other housing providers based on a prospective tenant’s source of lawful income. N.J.S.A. 10:5-12(g)(1)-(2) & (h)(1)-(2). Sources of lawful income include subsidies or vouchers provided by federal, state, or local rental-assistance programs, including Section 8 housing choice vouchers, SRAP (State Rental Assistance Program), and TRA (temporary rental assistance). The LAD also prohibits posting or causing to be posted any advertisement for the rental of any real property “which expresses, directly or indirectly, any limitation, specification or discrimination as to . . . source of lawful income used for rental . . . payments.” N.J.S.A. 10:5-12(g)(3) & (h)(3). The New Jersey Supreme Court has recognized that discrimination on the basis of source of lawful income is particularly harmful because it impacts some of New Jersey’s most vulnerable residents.

In 2019, DCR discovered that a significant number of online advertisements for rental housing in New Jersey contained unlawful limitations, specifications, or statements that discriminated on the basis of source of lawful income. These advertisements, posted by third parties, appeared across a wide range of online platforms, and contained discriminatory statements such as the following:

- “No Section 8”
- “No TRA”

- “Sorry Not Section 8 or TRA Approved”
- “Currently not accepting section 8 tenants”

DCR and Zillow have agreed to work together to help address such discriminatory language, and have begun taking steps toward that goal. Steps that DCR and Zillow have taken or jointly agree to take include:

1. Zillow worked with DCR to update three pages on its website—the Respectful Renter Pledge; the Fair Housing Guide; and the Good Neighbor Policy—to incorporate information about prohibitions against discrimination based on source of lawful income.
2. Zillow sent out information to all of its New Jersey advertisers with information about New Jersey’s fair housing laws, including links to DCR’s fact sheets on the LAD’s protections with respect to housing generally and source of lawful income discrimination in particular.
3. Zillow and DCR are collaborating on Zillow’s content filtering terms to allow Zillow to more comprehensively detect and remove advertisements that unlawfully discriminate on the basis of source of lawful income, including Section 8 vouchers and other forms of state and local housing assistance.
4. DCR and Zillow are exploring new methods for educating housing advertisers of the requirements of the LAD, including the prohibition on refusing to accept a source of lawful income. This will include methods for educating users seeking to post rental advertisements for New Jersey properties on Zillow’s platform.
5. As part of “Fair Housing Month” this April, Zillow is planning to spotlight DCR’s Director in a video Q&A focused on emerging fair housing issues in light of COVID-19. With New Jersey as a jurisdiction on the cutting edge of fair housing protections, Zillow and DCR will also work together on a blog post that will be published on Zillow’s website and promoted by DCR and Zillow that outlines protections against housing discrimination in New Jersey, with a focus on the prohibition on discrimination based on source of lawful income.
6. Zillow and DCR are collaborating on additional public outreach measures, such as leveraging promotional space to deliver graphics that inform Zillow users of their fair housing rights in New Jersey.
7. Zillow and DCR are collaborating on additional fair housing training for Zillow employees regarding source of lawful income discrimination.

Going forward, Zillow and DCR will continue to use their expertise and resources to collaborate on solutions to the problem of housing discrimination, including discrimination based on source of lawful income. Both DCR and Zillow are proud of this collaboration, and are excited to continue this productive relationship.

Jennifer Butler

4/30/20

ZILLOW GROUP
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

DATE

By Jennifer Butler, Director

Rachel Wainer Apter

4/22/20

NEW JERSEY DIVISION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

DATE

By Rachel Wainer Apter, Director