Introduction and History of San Francisco’s Sanctuary Ordinance

San Francisco is a city committed to immigrants and stands firmly against the states across the country that have developed repressive laws against the immigrant community. In accordance with this commitment, the City passed the Sanctuary Ordinance, or "City and County of Refuge" Ordinance, in 1989.

The Sanctuary Ordinance prohibits police officers or other city employees from (1) inquiring about immigration status, (2) helping Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with immigration investigations or arrests unless federal or state law or a warrant requires such help, or (3) using any municipal funds to assist the federal government with immigration enforcement, unless so required. Landlords and property owners can assist the City in protecting immigrants’ rights by following these guidelines.

Do Not Ask:

California law prohibits landlords from inquiring about immigration status of tenants or prospective tenants or from requiring any statements related to his or her immigration or citizenship status.*

Do Not Discriminate:

California law prohibits landlords from arbitrarily discriminating based on national origin or race unless it relates to the responsibilities of tenancy.† Discrimination based on immigration or citizenship status may, in effect, be considered discrimination based on race or national origin. All people have a civil right to look for housing.

What Counts As Discrimination?

Unlawful discrimination includes refusing to sell, rent, or lease; refusing to negotiate for a sale, rental, or lease; representing that housing is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when it actually is available; otherwise denying or withholding housing accommodations; providing inferior housing terms, conditions, privileges, facilities, or services; harassing a person in connection with housing accommodations; canceling or terminating a sale or rental agreement.