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**ADVOCATES CALL FOR FAIR HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH  
ARREST & CONVICTION RECORDS**

*Just Housing Amendment will ban housing discrimination based on records, supporting over 1 million Cook County adults while reducing recidivism and strengthening families*

CHICAGO – Advocates for fair and just housing welcome Cook County Commissioner Brandon Johnson’s recent introduction of an amendment which would ensure that individuals with records cannot be discriminated against when searching for housing in Cook County.

“This is an issue with far reaching impacts,” says Patricia Fron, Executive Director of the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance and Just Housing Initiative leader. “One in three Americans has an arrest record before they turn 23. That’s more than have four-year college degrees. In Cook County, this means that more than 1 million residents are potentially directly impacted. Barring individuals with records from stable housing opportunities is simply unjust.”

“The Just Housing Amendment offers a path to fairness and equity for Cook County,” says chief sponsor Commissioner Johnson of the 1st District. “In my district alone, we have over 3,000 people per year returning to our communities from Illinois prisons. These are men and women with families, with children, who deserve the support needed to make a change.”

Currently, many housing providers impose blanket arrest and conviction record bans that result in people with records being shut out of housing options. This practice is fundamentally unfair and not only impacts the ability for individuals to access stable housing and rebuild their lives but is also often an avenue for race-based discrimination. The Just Housing Amendment will ensure that housing providers and housing authorities do not consider certain aspects of criminal records—such as arrests, juvenile records, and sealed and expunged records—when making housing determinations. For applicants with a conviction on their record, housing providers will need to conduct an individualized assessment and consider factors such as the nature of the offense and the time that has passed since the offense.

“This issue goes beyond the person with the record,” said Andrea Hall, Director of Organizing at Community Renewal Society. “The families are impacted just as harshly as those with the actual record. When I went to apply for a rental, I had no idea that the whole family is treated as though we all have a record. How can we move forward with rebuilding our lives if we cannot even access housing?”

“The use of criminal records in housing limits the ability of justice-involved individuals to rebuild their lives and benefit their communities, and the burden of this harmful discrimination falls most heavily on Black and brown families,” said Marie-Claire Tran-Leung, Senior Attorney in Housing and Community Justice at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. “Blanket bans on housing applicants with criminal records are fundamentally unfair and undoubtedly contribute to racial and economic injustice. It is time for Cook County to join the movement towards just housing and fairness for all.”

Supporters and members of the Just Housing Initiative, a coalition of 114 organizations that advocate for fair housing, will be rallying in support of the amendment on April 24 when the Cook County Human Relations Committee holds a hearing to consider the proposal.

“This is not a new idea. Other jurisdictions across the country are implementing similar measures as an integral component of criminal justice reform,” says Gianna Baker, Outreach Manager of Housing Action Illinois and Just Housing Initiative leader. “We see drastically reduced rates of recidivism when individuals with records have stable homes. This translates into stronger families, safer communities, and a more resilient Cook County.”

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The Just Housing Initiative is a coalition of 114 supporting organizations and individuals with lived experiences who have come together to address housing barriers faced by individuals with arrest and conviction records. The coalition’s member organizations include social service providers, community organizers, legal and policy experts, housing and criminal justice advocates. Learn more at [justhousinginitiative.org](https://justhousinginitiative.org).

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