DATE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Landlord Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Landlord Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Housing Provider,

Thank you for considering my housing application. I am a Housing Choice Voucher Program recipient. This means that the government pays all or part of my rent. Created in the 1970s, the “Section 8” Housing Choice Voucher Program is the nation’s largest source of rental assistance. Some of these voucher programs are specifically aimed at helping special populations like veterans.

Recent changes to Virginia’s fair housing laws have made it illegal for housing providers to discriminate on the basis of someone’s “source of funds,” or how they pay their rent. This means that housing providers cannot deny housing to people who receive vouchers. “Deny” can mean either outright saying “we don’t take vouchers” or changing policies to keep voucher holders from renting. For example, if a housing provider has a policy that said that all tenants must make three times the rent, that could unintentionally discriminate against voucher holders. Voucher holders are generally lower income folks, which means most, if not all of them will not make three times the monthly rent. Denying a voucher holder an apartment because they do not make three times the rent would essentially prohibit most, *if not all*, voucher holders from renting that apartment, and thus, that practice could be considered illegal discrimination. All a housing provider needs to know is how much the voucher pays (this is known as the “payment standard” and should be printed on the voucher documents) to determine if the tenant can pay for the unit. This does not mean housing providers cannot ask that market rate renters (folks without vouchers) make 3 times the rent, it just means that housing providers should be careful that their policies are not denying apartments to folks with vouchers.

Additionally, no guarantor is needed when a tenant has a voucher, because vouchers are guaranteed by the local housing authority and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). If a voucher holder loses their job, the housing authority will step in and pay the entire monthly rent for as long as it takes for that tenant to become employed again. This is a *guarantee* that even if the tenant has a financial crisis, the rent will be paid. This shows that voucher holders are not “risky” tenants.

Thank you again for your careful consideration of my application, and I appreciate your willingness to follow Virginia laws protecting voucher holders like me from discrimination.

Sincerely,