



Statement on Civil Rights Protections for Immigrant Communities January 2025

Here in New Jersey, we remain firmly committed to protecting our state’s immigrant communities from unlawful discrimination and bias-based harassment. Our state is home to over two million immigrants. They are the backbone of our communities, and they strengthen our labor force and are critical to our state’s economy. It is critical that our state’s immigrant population be able to work, find housing, attend school, seek medical care, and access public services free from discrimination and harassment.

The New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD) prohibits employers, housing providers, and places of public accommodation—that is, places open to the public, which include schools, hospitals, health care facilities, stores, and police departments, to name just a few—from discriminating based on national origin, ancestry, nationality, race, and other protected characteristics. These protections apply no matter your citizenship status or your immigration status. Under the LAD, all people—including non-U.S. citizens, refugees, and migrants—have an equal right to live free from discrimination.

Employers, housing providers, and places open to the public violate the LAD when they discriminate based on a person’s actual or perceived national origin, ancestry, nationality, race, or other protected characteristics. Nationality is closely intertwined with where a person has citizenship, and national origin and ancestry refer to a person’s (or their ancestor’s) place of origin. These protections mean, among other things, that workplaces or landlords are prohibited from maintaining policies or practices that treat people differently based on their perceived or actual connection to a specific country. The LAD also prohibits all forms of profiling based on national origin, ancestry, nationality, race, and other protected characteristics. It is unlawful, for example, for a municipal court officer to demand that a person show identification because they have a Spanish surname.

The LAD’s protections against nationality-based discrimination also mean that it is unlawful in New Jersey to discriminate based on citizenship—with a limited exception for restrictions mandated by state or federal law, such as the federal I-9 employment eligibility verification form, or for employment restrictions that are “necessary to protect the national interest.” For example, it is unlawful for a hospital to deny someone treatment or a school to treat a student differently because they are not a U.S. citizen.

The LAD also requires employers, housing providers, and places open to the public to proactively address and respond to harassment that is based on national origin, ancestry, nationality, race, and other protected characteristics. For example, if a landlord knows that a tenant has repeatedly harassed a neighbor based on their country of origin or language spoken and the harassment has

created a hostile living environment, the housing provider violates the LAD if it does not take action to put a stop to the harassment.

Critically, the LAD also prohibits retaliation against anyone who complains about discrimination or harassment. Under the LAD, individuals who engage in or threaten retaliation for discrimination can be held personally liable for their actions. For instance, a housing manager who threatens to report a tenant to immigration authorities because the tenant complained about discrimination would violate the LAD. They could be held personally liable for their actions, and their employer may also be held liable.

We remain committed to protecting the civil rights of all New Jerseyans, and we will not tolerate the targeting of individuals based on their national origin, ancestry, nationality, race, or any other protected characteristics. Make no mistake: If you violate the law by unlawfully targeting our state's immigrant communities, we will hold you accountable.

We strongly encourage community members to report evidence of discrimination or bias-based harassment to DCR. To find out more or to file a complaint, please go to NJCivilRights.gov or call 1.833.NJDCR4U. For language assistance, email DCR at LanguageHelp@njcivilrights.gov. DCR's services are free to all people regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, and DCR employees do not ask about citizenship or immigration status. For more information, please consult DCR's resources on [national origin discrimination](#) in [employment](#), [housing](#), and [places of public accommodation](#).