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## New York Law Would Revoke Licenses Of Real Estate Agents Who Engage In Discrimination

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Real estate agents could have their license revoked if they engage in racial discrimination on the job.

After a newspaper investigation uncovered widespread race-based discrimination in the Long Island housing market, New York has passed a bill that puts a real estate agent or broker's license on the line if they are found to engage in discriminatory behavior.

The [bill](#), introduced by James Gaughran, a state senator for the 5th district, which covers the North Shore of Long Island, is on its way to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his signature.

The new law would revoke the license of any real estate broker, agent or salesperson who is found to have violated the state's human rights law. It stems from a [2019 investigation by Newsday](#) that revealed agents were steering buyers to certain neighborhoods based on their race and requiring non-white buyers to produce mortgage documentation before showing them homes while not requiring the same of white customers.

Michael Romer, a real estate attorney with [Romer Debbas LLP](#), said the legislation provides the "missing teeth" to New York's existing human rights laws as they pertain to real estate discrimination.

"Currently, the State does not have the power to suspend or termination a license based upon a violation of the Human Rights Law," Romer said. "The State's ability to suspend, fine or terminate was limited to other infractions such as misrepresentations and fraud. This legislation would make fair housing related regulations very real in real estate circles."

Many groups in the real estate industry said they support the legislation.

The [New York Residential Agent Continuum](#) (NYRAC) a broker advocacy group, lobbied in favor of the bill during a trip to Albany in February.

“NYRAC is an association of real estate agents founded on ethics and greater transparency for the consumer in the New York City real estate market,” the organization said in a statement. “We strongly support legislation that safeguards the consumer and prohibits discrimination in the real estate industry.”

Cathy Taub, a broker with [Sotheby's International Realty](#) and the founding chairperson of NYRAC along with Heather McDonough Domi of [Compass](#), said Sotheby's has been "proactive in educating its agents."

"Agents are required to take a fair housing course and update on the anti-discrimination laws of New York State, which now specifically includes the changes reflected in this amended fair housing law," Taub said. "This course is in addition to the continuing education required by the State of New York. This is a mandatory course and reflects Sotheby's International Realty's commitment to its agents and clients as to the importance of these issues in today's world."

[Real Estate Board of New York](#) (REBNY) President James Whelan called the bill “an important step in fighting discrimination and disparate treatment which people of diverse backgrounds may experience because of a small fraction of individuals within the industry who flout the law.”

“All New Yorkers must have equal access and opportunity when searching for housing or commercial real estate,” Whelan said.