

February 22, 2023

Dear Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, Texas State Senate and Texas State House,

We write as American civil rights organizations dedicated to protecting the rights of all Americans, including Americans from Iran, to express our concern and condemnation of Texas Senate Bill 147 -- which would bar citizens of Iran, China, North Korea, and Russia from purchasing property in Texas. As champions of individual freedoms, democracy and human rights that are enshrined in the Constitution, we maintain that this bill is both racist and unconstitutional and must not be signed into law.

Our communities should not be discriminated against because of national origin. Our communities cannot be denied the ability to purchase property and live freely based on our heritage. This is a direct violation of protected constitutional rights, and a flagrant disregard for people's humanity.

Immigrants and refugees from Iran deserve freedom in the United States, to have all rights that other citizens and residents have, and not be subjected to laws like this exclusionary and oppressive bill. By prohibiting an individual who is a national of Iran, along with other communities, from purchasing property in Texas, including companies owned by such citizens, the legislation could apply to a broad swathe of individuals who are rightfully and legally in the United States and Texas. In the case of Iran, the bill would apply to any national of Iran who has secured a visa through the legal immigration process. But it could also apply to a much broader group of people. As Iranian citizenship has long been passed down on a hereditary basis through the father through no action of an individual, the bill would arguably apply to a large number of Americans of Iranian background, including many who were born in the United States and Texas. Additionally many individuals of Armenian, Afghan, Assyrian, and Kurdish descent are immigrants from Iran, along with many other ethnic communities. This bill is fundamentally discriminatory and an ugly case of nativism and racism that should be beneath the values of the Lone Star state.

California's Alien Land Law established similar exclusions dating as far back as 1913. The law barred Asian immigrants from owning land and was amended numerous times to bar U.S.-born children of Asian immigrant parents from leasing and land ownership, even extending to corporations controlled by Asian immigrants. These laws primarily impacted Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian immigrants. While they were eventually struck down by the California Supreme Court in 1952 in *Sei Fujii v. California*, 242 P.2d 617 (Cal. 1952), the laws were motivated by and further deepened prejudice towards and discriminatory treatment of Asian communities throughout California and other parts of the country, most famously with the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII.

From this history, we recognize that passage of TX SB147 could inflict deep harm on multiple immigrant communities that lingers well beyond any future, favorable court ruling. Moreover, the experience of Executive Order 13769, commonly referred to as the Muslim Ban - a version of

which was unconscionably upheld by the Supreme Court - underscores that our communities cannot accept outrageous and unconstitutional bans from our political leaders.

This bill cannot stand in the Lone Star State. We call on you to take immediate action, stand up for the rights of all Texans and stop Texas Senate Bill 147.

Signed,

Armenian American Action Network (AAAN)
National Iranian American Council (NIAC)
ACCESS of WNY
Afghans For A Better Tomorrow
Arab American Civic Council
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
Armenians for Housing Justice
Asian American Leadership Council
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Justice in San Antonio, TX
Asian Texans for Justice
Brooklyn Raga Massive
CAIR-Houston
Elmahaba Center
Japanese American Citizens League
MPower Change Action Fund
Muslims for Just Futures
National Immigration Law Center
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)
Project South
Rise AAPI
The Palestinian Youth Movement
Tsuru for Solidarity
Woori Juntos
Yerazad