

BUDGET JUSTICE IN FY 2024: NEW YORK STATE MUST PASS & FUND STATEWIDE RIGHT TO COUNSEL (A1493/S2721)!

Our New York communities need long-term solutions that will keep us safe and securely housed. To prevent displacement and keep New Yorkers in their homes, *New York State must pass Statewide Right to Counsel (Joyner-A1493/May-S2721) and fund its implementation with \$172 million in the fiscal year 2024 budget.*

The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition is fighting for **Statewide Right to Counsel legislation (A1493/S2721)**, introduced by Senator Rachel May and Assembly Member Latoya Joyner, which would strengthen New York City's Right to Counsel law and guarantee the right to a free lawyer to ALL tenants facing eviction across New York State.

In New York City and the twenty plus other cities, states and counties that have passed Right to Counsel legislation, Right to Counsel has been **proven to prevent evictions and keep tenants housed:**

- After the historic passage of NYC's Right to Counsel law in 2017, 84% of tenants with a Right to Counsel lawyer have won their case and been able to remain in their homes.
- The seven cities that had a Right to Counsel as of 2021 saw up to a 77% reduction in evictions.

Right to Counsel also **saves governments millions of public dollars**, over and above the cost of its implementation. In a study of Right to Counsel's cost outside of New York City, Stout estimated that:

- Implementation of a statewide eviction Right to Counsel could decrease eviction filings outside New York City by at least 19%.
- New York State could see cost savings of \$3 - \$6 per dollar invested in Right to Counsel, like most cities and states with an eviction Right to Counsel. These dollars would otherwise be spent on shelter, emergency room costs, homelessness services, and more.



BUDGET JUSTICE IN FY 2024: \$172M FOR STATEWIDE RIGHT TO COUNSEL (A1493/S2721)!

The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition and our statewide partners urge NYS to pass Statewide Right to Counsel (A1493/S2721) and support its implementation with the following appropriations, totaling ~\$172M for FY 2024.

\$37M for legal representation outside of NYC

Eviction proceedings are complex and violent processes that are nearly impossible to navigate alone. And yet, tenants outside of New York City do not have a Right to Counsel and the vast majority of tenants in housing court can't afford a lawyer. **This funding, which would increase over a five year implementation period, would guarantee legal representation in eviction cases for all tenants outside of NYC.**

\$62.5M for legal representation within NYC

In 2017, NYC tenants won the first ever Right to Counsel in eviction proceedings in the country. However, NYC's existing Right to Counsel is not adequately funded to ensure best practices, nor does it cover all NYC tenants facing eviction. **This funding, which would increase over a five year implementation period, would supplement NYC's funding for the existing RTC law to support robust legal representation; and would enable the expansion of Right to Counsel to all NYC tenants in eviction cases.**

\$40.3M for affirmative cases outside of NYC

Landlords evict tenants through many other means beyond formal eviction cases, such as harassing tenants. Landlords are also able to increase their profits by neglecting to provide the healthy, safe housing that tenants are legally entitled to. In our current market, in which tenants cannot find any available affordable housing, many tenants are forced to choose between remaining in dangerous conditions or becoming homeless. Though the law often supports tenants when it comes to harassment and repairs, the vast majority of tenants cannot afford an attorney to help them assert their rights in court. **This funding would build out the infrastructure outside of NYC to enable more tenant-initiated cases--a critical step in transforming housing courts from eviction machines to places that hold landlords accountable, uphold tenants' rights, and enable tenants to remain in their homes.**

\$12M for attorney pipeline

Our country faces a national civil attorney shortage, exacerbated, in housing law practice, by chronic underfunding and other difficult work conditions faced by attorneys. To implement Right to Counsel, NYS needs attorneys with the time, capacity and resources to ensure full representation for tenants. **This funding will enable the Office of Civil Representation (established through the Statewide Right to Counsel bill) to determine and initiate the most effective strategies to support NYS legal services providers in attracting, training and retaining new talent.**

\$8.9M for tenant organizing outside of NYC

Organizers play a critical role in implementing Right to Counsel, ensuring tenants know about their rights and are equipped to fight for a just recognition of those rights in and outside of courts. **This funding would support community organizations outside of New York City in building out the infrastructure to provide tenants' rights education and tenant organizing, which includes hosting Know Your Rights Trainings, supporting tenant associations, and referring tenants to legal services.**

\$5M for tenant organizing in NYC

The funding would enable the full implementation of NYC Local Law 53, which went into effect in November 2021. Local Law 53 requires the City to work with trusted tenant organizing groups to engage and educate tenants about their Right to Counsel.

\$6.4M for the Office of Civil Representation

Statewide Right to Counsel establishes an Office of Civil Representation to contract with legal service providers and community organizations, and oversee the implementation of Right to Counsel. **This funding would enable the office's start up costs and operations.**



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