

# Statewide Right to Counsel

*How we can guarantee the right to a FREE lawyer for  
ALL tenants facing eviction in New York State!*



**Tuesday, March 28th**

# Who are we?



## Who is the Right to Counsel Coalition?

The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition (RTCNYC) is a tenant-led coalition that formed in 2014 to change Housing Courts, prevent displacement, and stop the eviction crisis that threatens our families, our homes, and our neighborhoods. RTCNYC is made up of tenants, organizers, advocates, legal services organizations, faith leaders, unions and more! In 2017, after a three-year grassroots campaign, the Coalition won the Right to Counsel, making New York the first city in the country to establish a Right to Counsel for low-income tenants facing eviction.



# Housing Courts Must Change! Campaign

The HCMC campaign is a statewide campaign launched by RTCNYC in 2020 to transform NYS courts from an “eviction machine” to a place that holds landlords accountable, upholds tenants’ rights, and enables tenants to remain in their homes.

**Our priority legislation is Statewide Right to Counsel (S2721/A1493), introduced by Senator Rachel May and Assembly Member Latoya Joyner, which guarantees ALL tenants across New York State the RIGHT to a FREE lawyer when facing an eviction.**



# NEW YORK STATE TENANTS NEED RIGHT TO COUNSEL

*Our state legislation strengthens Right to Counsel in NYC and guarantees the right to a lawyer for ALL tenants across New York State!*

## Statewide Right to Counsel...

- ✓ Applies to ALL tenants facing eviction.
- ✓ Covers ANY case that could result in a tenant losing their housing.
- ✓ Requires the courts, judges, and landlords to ensure that tenants know about and can use their Right to Counsel.



*To learn more, check out our website at [righttocounselnyc.org/statewiderto](https://righttocounselnyc.org/statewiderto)*



# Why do New York State tenants need Right to Counsel?

*New York State has an eviction crisis!*

- Nearly **160,000** active eviction cases across NYS.
- **92,000** New Yorkers are experiencing homelessness.
- Majority of cases are initiated by landlords and **almost ALL landlords have lawyers in eviction cases, while most tenants do not.**
- **Nearly one in four NYC families with kids under 18 faced evictions in 2022.** Families with children under 18 account for nearly half of attempted evictions, while making up only 28% of New York City's households.





# Why do New York State tenants need Right to Counsel?

*Right to Counsel is effective at stopping evictions!*

## In New York City:

- 86% of tenants who have a Right to Counsel lawyer won their case and were able to remain in their homes.
- Evictions across the city are down by nearly 40%.
- Landlords are suing tenants less - Eviction filings dropped by 30%!
- Defaults dropped by more than 30%, which means more tenants are showing up in Housing Court to fight their cases.

## Across the country:

- The seven cities that now have a Right to Counsel (laws passed before 2021) have seen up to a 77 percent reduction in evictions!
- San Francisco saw a 10% drop in eviction filing rates in just one year, and two-thirds of all represented tenants were able to remain in their homes.
- Cleveland found that within the first six months of having Right to Counsel, 93% of tenants with a Right to Counsel lawyer avoided eviction or an involuntary move.

# Why does Right to Counsel matter?



- **Right to Counsel changes the power relationship between landlords and tenants in and outside Housing Court.** When tenants have the RIGHT to a lawyer, it reaffirms that tenants are worthy of representation, to know their rights, to be respected, and that the government will guarantee their legal defense!
- **Right to Counsel protects tenants' rights and emboldens more tenants to fight for their homes!**
- Every year, landlords try to evict hundreds of thousands of Black and brown New Yorkers. Many are immigrants and most are women. **Right to Counsel doesn't just stop evictions, it helps fight back against the displacement of people of color.**
- For many landlords, evictions are essential to their business model. Landlords evict tenants because they have power - and because it increases their profits - not because the law supports them. **Right to Counsel disrupts this business model**, by keeping tenants in their homes and stopping displacement.

## The economic impact of Right to Counsel



Research by Stout and from around the country has repeatedly demonstrated that **investing in an eviction Right to Counsel is a good fiscal investment** – Right to Counsel creates more positive economic impacts and cost savings than the cost of providing legal representation, **saving millions in public money that would otherwise be spent on shelter and emergency room costs, homelessness services, and more.**

***For every dollar invested in Right to Counsel, New York State will save ~\$3-6.***





## **BUDGET JUSTICE IN FY 2024: New York State must pass and fully fund statewide Right to Counsel (S2721/A1493)!**

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 and fund its implementation with \$172 million in the fiscal year 2024 budget, to enable...*

- ★ Guaranteed legal representation for tenants facing eviction across NYS.
- ★ Expanded infrastructure outside of NYC to empower 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.
- ★ Growth of community organizations that provide tenants' rights education and tenant organizing.
- ★ Creation of the Office of Civil Representation, which will oversee Right to Counsel's implementation, and help legal services providers determine and enact effective strategies to attract, train and retain new talent.

# JOIN US!

**Will Brooklyn Community Board 4 join the movement for Right to Counsel and pass a resolution in support of #StatewideRTC?**



# Q+A



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