

SUPPORT RIGHT TO COUNSEL FOR LOW INCOME TENANTS IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY

If you believe that all low income tenants in Westchester County should receive free legal representation in eviction proceedings, *call, email, or write your county legislator today.* Tell your legislator:

Under the US Constitution, no one may be criminally prosecuted without legal representation. If a defendant cannot afford an attorney, an attorney is provided free of charge.


Under New York State Law, no one may lose custody of their children without legal representation. If a parent cannot afford an attorney, an attorney is provided free of charge.

But **93%** of tenants facing eviction in Westchester housing courts have no legal representation. Tenants without attorneys typically lose their case - and their homes - within 3-4 minutes. *No one in Westchester County should be evicted from their home without legal representation. If a tenant cannot afford an attorney, an attorney should be provided free of charge.*

Find your legislator here.

<https://giswww.westchestergov.com/ElectedOfficials/index.html>

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Sign our online petition here:

https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/the-right-to-counsel?source=direct_link&

To receive regular email updates, please email:

rtcwestchester@gmail.com

Or print and mail the following letter.



Legislator: _____

Westchester County Board of Legislators
800 Michaelian Office Building
148 Martine Avenue
White Plains, New York 10601

I, _____, am writing to urge you to support a right to counsel program in eviction proceedings in Westchester County. Tenants in Westchester County should not be evicted without legal representation. The County should pass a law ensuring that low income tenants receive representation in eviction proceedings free of charge.

Sincerely,

Address:

Westchester County



Right to Counsel Coalition
*Advocating for the preservation of
every person's fundamental right to
safe and secure housing.*

STOP EVICTIONS - PREVENT HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT RIGHT TO COUNSEL

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

The Need:

- Every year over **10,000** eviction proceedings are filed in Housing Courts in Westchester.
- The contests are lopsided: **93%** of landlords have lawyers, but only **7%** of tenants do.
- Tenants without lawyers rarely win their cases in housing court.
- Tenants without lawyers typically lose their cases (& their homes) in less than 4 minutes.
- Evictions are often the first step toward becoming homeless.
- Evictions are not just about rent arrears.
- In FY2019, **4,960** people entered the Westchester homeless system.
- Of those, **2,911** people were new to the homeless system.
- In 2019 the County spent over **\$38 million** to house homeless families and individuals.
- Evictions make it harder to rent another apartment, help lock in long-term poverty, and cause psychological trauma, and feelings of hopelessness and terror that span generations – especially for kids who lose the security of believing their parents can provide a home.

The Solution:

- Westchester needs to level the playing field for tenants in Housing Court by establishing a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction.
- Housing is a basic human right – it shouldn't be taken away without due process.
- Communities across America have established a Right to Counsel – in big cities like New York City and in smaller cities like Cleveland, Ohio and Minneapolis, MN.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly increased the need for tenant representation in housing court. With millions unemployed, experts warn of a “tsunami of evictions”.
- Preventing homelessness is a core issue of racial equity: in Westchester African-Americans comprise **14%** of our population and **24%** of our population in poverty, but **69%** of our point-in-time population experiencing homelessness.

Join the Fight: Ask your Westchester County legislator to support a RIGHT TO COUNSEL in eviction proceedings in Westchester