

## New Analysis Finds that Legal Representation Under Right to Counsel Law Accounts for the Majority of the Decline in NYC Evictions



### For Immediate Release:

March 26, 2019

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**New York, NY**—A new analysis released late Monday, March 25, by the Community Service Society entitled “[NYC Right to Counsel: First year results and potential for expansion](#),” shows that **evictions declined more than five times faster in zip codes where the Right to Counsel law is currently in effect** than in similar zip codes where the law is not.

“Right to Counsel is the reason why the eviction rate is going down, which not only allows for tenants to stay in their homes, but also for them to feel strengthened and supported to keep asserting their rights to defend their homes and communities!” **Lorena Lopez, Tenant Organizer at Catholic Migration Services**

The zip codes where a **Right to Counsel has been implemented accounted for more than 60 percent of the overall decline in evictions** analyzed. This is a clear illustration of the effectiveness of this policy at keeping low-income tenants in their homes.

The analysis compares zip codes where the Right to Counsel law is currently implemented to zip codes without Right to Counsel that have comparable rates of poverty, eviction, and rental units.

“This report confirms what we at Legal Services NYC know to be true—Right to Counsel prevents evictions.” said **Marika Dias, Director of the Tenant Rights Coalition at Legal Services NYC**. “With 200 advocates defending tenants against eviction citywide, Legal Services NYC attorneys successfully prevent eviction in the overwhelming majority of cases we handle, and in all cases we ensure that tenant rights are upheld. When NYC tenants fought for a right to counsel, they did so believing that having lawyers would help stem the tide of displacement and keep tenants in their homes. They were right!”

The Right to Counsel law guarantees low-income tenants an attorney when facing an eviction in housing court. Signed into law in 2017, it is currently in effect in 20 New York City zip codes, and will be phased-in citywide by 2022. In just one year, the law has successfully decreased evictions, as this report shows.

The newly released analysis also found that many tenants ineligible for Right to Counsel face housing hardships—such as being threatened with eviction, falling behind on rent, or moving in with other people. [The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition is currently working on passing Intro 1104](#), which would expand the law’s income threshold from 200% of the federal poverty level to 400%. The report found that passing this law may cover an estimated additional 31% of tenants in housing court, meaning that with this new law, nearly all tenants facing eviction in housing court would have a right to full legal representation.

Additionally, the coalition is working on introducing legislation to fund community organizing groups to educate and conduct outreach about Right to Counsel, so tenants know about the rights they have to defend their homes.

## Key Findings:

- From 2017 to 2018, evictions declined more than five times faster in zip codes where the Right to Counsel law has been implemented than in similar zip codes where the law has not yet taken effect.
- Right to Counsel accounted for more than 60% of the overall decline in evictions.
- Tenants were 3 times as likely to receive legal services in RTC zip codes, compared to comparable non-RTC zip codes.
- More than a third of tenants with incomes between 200%-400% of the federal poverty guidelines experience one or more housing hardships, including being threatened with eviction, falling behind on rent, and moving in with other people.

## Additional quotes:

“The findings show that RTC in the first year is working,” said **Randy Dillard, Tenant Leader at Community Action for Safer Apartments**. “We need organizing groups, who have strong relationships with the community, to be funded to do outreach so that there are no more tenants losing their homes or being displaced because they don’t know about this new law.”

“In our outreach efforts to bring awareness of RTC since its enactment, it has been evident that tenants feel less vulnerable, better protected, and empowered. Now the data backs up what we’ve known all along: that RTC is making a real difference in the lives of tenants.” **Lauren Springer, Tenant Leader at Catholic Migration Services**

“This report confirms what many of us have already known: Right To Counsel prevents evictions and keeps families in their homes,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney-In-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “It’s imperative that more New Yorkers know of and have access to legal representation in housing court. We hope the City can join us to build on this success to ensure that low-income tenants have robust representation and a fair shot in the courtroom.”

“The numbers in the CSS report reveal one of the exciting promises of Right to Counsel: fewer low income people will be evicted and face homelessness when they have a right to an attorney in a Housing Court case. Despite arguments made refuting the effectiveness of counsel in preventing eviction, this new data shows that RTC is making a real difference in the lives of New York City tenants. The data also shines light on the great work that the legal service providers are doing.” **Jenny Laurie, Executive Director, Housing Court Answers**

“CSS’s findings are important empirical evidence that the Right to Counsel is having a profound impact on the low-income communities of New York City,” said **Andrew Scherer, a law professor and Policy Director of the Impact Center for Public Interest Law at New York Law School**. “Not only are the numbers of evictions down, the numbers of cases filed in court and the numbers of households entering homeless shelters due to eviction are also dropping. The tenant-led campaign to win the right to counsel is really paying off.”

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*The [Right to Counsel NYC Coalition](#) is a broad-based coalition of tenants, community organizers, legal service providers, academics, and more. In 2017, the coalition won a 3-year campaign to make it a right for low-income tenants to have an attorney when facing an eviction in housing court. NYC became the first city in the nation to win this right. The coalition continues to organize for a just implementation and expansion of the law.*