Just the Facts: Right to Counsel Stops Evictions in NYC

In 2017, the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition won a campaign to guarantee low-income tenants the right to a lawyer when facing an eviction in housing court. The law is currently being implemented in 25 NYC zip codes, and will be fully phased-in by 2022.

Here are several key facts that show how the law has been a huge success in decreasing evictions in NYC:

- In 2018 and 2019, 84% of tenants who had a Right to Counsel (RTC) lawyer were able to remain in their homes. This is 10,636 families and 28,392 individuals.

- In 2019, evictions in NYC were down 15%—the largest single-year decrease since RTC began.

- RTC is the cause of most of the decline in evictions. Evictions have dropped 29% in RTC zip codes since the law began—nearly double the rate of comparable zip codes.

- In 2013, only 1% of tenants had a lawyer in housing court. By the end of June 2019 32% of tenants citywide had a lawyer, while 62% of tenants in RTC zip codes had a lawyer.

- Eviction filings declined by 5.4% in 2018, meaning landlords sued 12,357 fewer families than the previous year. In 2019, filings declined by 6%, as landlords sued 13,491 fewer families.

- RTC also helps preserve the city’s affordable housing stock, by keeping long-term, rent-stabilized tenants in their homes. More than 50% of families who have used RTC have lived in their homes for more than 6 years, and more than 40% lived in their homes for more than 10 years.

Sources:
- Office of the Mayor
- NYC Office of Civil Justice Universal Access 2019 Report
- NYC Office of Civil Justice 2018 Annual Report
- Right to Counsel and Stronger Rent Laws Helped Reduce Evictions in 2019, a report by the Community Service Society of New York
- NYC Right to Counsel: First year results and potential for expansion, a report by the Community Service Society of New York
- Forced Moves and Eviction in New York City, a report by Robin Hood and the Columbia Population Research Center
- The Effect of Evictions on Low-Income Households, 2018 study