

# FACTS ON THE NEED TO EXPAND THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL 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.

Our current campaign is calling for the passage of two bills to expand the Right to Counsel (RTC): Intro 1104 and Intro 1529.

Here are key facts that show how the law has been a huge success in decreasing evictions and should be expanded:



## RIGHT TO COUNSEL STOPS EVICTIONS IN NYC!

- In 2018 and 2019, **84%** of tenants who had a 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—nearly double the rate of comparable zip codes.
- 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.

## WE MUST PASS INTRO 1104 TO DOUBLE RTC'S INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVEL FROM 200% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL TO 400%!

- **31%** of tenants in housing court make above the RTC's income eligibility level of 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). That is less than **\$24,980** for a single adult or less than **\$51,500** for a family of four.
- Currently, a single New Yorker working full-time and making the **\$15 minimum wage** is not eligible for RTC.
- More than **1/3** of tenants with incomes between 200%-400% of the FPL experience housing hardships that indicate they are at-risk of eviction.

## WE MUST PASS INTRO 1529 TO SUPPORT AND FUND ORGANIZING SO MORE TENANTS KNOW ABOUT THEIR RIGHT TO COUNSEL!

- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had RTC did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- **77%** of these tenants said they needed repairs and **38%** said they faced landlord harassment. **63%** said they would like to be involved with a tenant organizing group, yet **88%** were not part of a group.
- On average each year, **1** organizer distributes information to **2,000** people, conducts outreach to **50** buildings, stops harassment in more than **125** households, and helps **100** families get repairs.

### 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

