



City of Springfield Massachusetts

Resolution 5238

Civil Right to Counsel in Housing Court

Information

Department:	City Council	Sponsors:	Jesse Lederman, Ward 1 Councilor Adam Gomez
Category:	General		

Attachments

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Body

Resolution Supporting Civil Right to Counsel in Housing Court

WHEREAS, Over 40,000 households in Massachusetts were served with eviction papers in 2018, including over 6,000 cases in Western Massachusetts, including tenants as well as homeowners who have faced foreclosure, and,

WHEREAS, 92% of these tenants received no legal guidance once the notice was delivered, nor assistance from an attorney in fighting the eviction in court, and

WHEREAS, Many tenants are unaware of their rights and legal protections both in and out of the courtroom, and

WHEREAS, Access to critical legal resources, guidance and support from an attorney prior to a court eviction can protect families from being displaced by an illegal or unnecessary eviction, prevent homelessness, and create a path to housing stability, and

WHEREAS, The Massachusetts Right to Counsel Coalition is a broad coalition of municipal leaders, housing advocates, and community groups who support legislation to provide a right to counsel in Massachusetts for those with low income who are facing eviction, and ensure access to resources and assistance that will prevent eviction and stabilize their housing, and

WHEREAS, Three Right to Counsel bills have been refiled for the 2019-20 Session and assigned to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary: S.913 'An Act to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings' filed by Senator Sal N. DiDomenico; H.3456 'An Act to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings' filed by Representative Chynah Tyler; H.1537 'An Act establishing a right to counsel in certain eviction cases' filed by Representatives David M. Rogers and Michael S. Day, which would make legal counsel a Right in certain civil housing court cases,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of Springfield, Massachusetts hereby expresses its support for the Right to Counsel Campaign in Massachusetts and urges the State Legislature to support establishment of said right through the passage of the aforementioned bills in such a form as to support the goal ensuring representation for individuals facing litigation in housing court.

Discussion

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