

Women in Crisis due to Housing

As of Aug. 16, 2021, about 4.5 million women nationally and over 60,000 women in Massachusetts were behind on rent. Women are evicted 16% more often than men. Nearly 2/3 of people who are 65 and older who are living in poverty are women putting them at a higher risk of housing instability.

Evictions Disproportionately Affect Women, Particularly Black Women

Asian, Black, and Latinx women are more likely to be behind on rent than white women. Black and Latinx renters are more likely to experience serial evictions, with 1 in 7 facing multiple evictions at the same address. Black women are more likely to have eviction cases filed against them, while also being more likely to have their eviction case dismissed.

Mothers, Children, and Eviction

Mothers are being evicted far more frequently than others, especially single mothers. The mere presence of children puts one at a significantly heightened risk of being evicted.

Health Impacts of Evictions on Women

Evictions negatively affect women's health, increase maternal depression, and parenting stress. For women facing eviction while pregnant, the stress of eviction is associated with low birth weight and premature birth.

Housing and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence survivors can face evictions due to that violence. Domestic violence survivors often are unaware of the eviction defenses afforded by Massachusetts law.

Right to Counsel's Approach

Right to counsel is a part of a comprehensive approach to level the playing field, prevent displacement, and provide housing stability for very vulnerable people in our communities. The Right to Counsel Coalition consists of over 200 diverse organizations including municipal leaders, property owners, and health care workers.

92% of homeless women have experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

“The eviction crisis is a women’s crisis – the right to counsel can help.”

National Women's Law Center, July 28, 2021

The Bills

S.874 and H.1436 would ensure that low-income tenants and owner-occupants of 1 to 3 family homes receive full legal representation. The program would be administered by the Mass Legal Assistance Corporation.

Momentum behind RTC

On August 27, 2021, the Treasury, Justice, and Housing Departments jointly urged states and municipalities to seize the opportunity provided by COVID relief funds and use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support long term housing stability programs, including right to counsel. Connecticut just passed a right to counsel bill and funded it initially with \$20 million in ARPA dollars over 2 years.

Starting a Right to Counsel Program in Mass

The Right to Counsel Coalition is urging the Legislature to fund the Right to Counsel with **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and allocate \$78 million over the next three years, or \$26 million/year**, to launch the Right to Counsel in Massachusetts while a permanent source of funding is identified. Funding in the amount of \$26 million/year was recommended by a 2020 report from the BBA.

For more information:
MassRTC.org