



When all give, all gain. | EST. 1918

10/6/23

Senate Chair, Senator Lydia Edwards  
Joint Committee on the Housing

House Chair, Representative James Arciero  
Joint Committee on the Housing

**RE: S. 864, An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts**

Dear Chairs Edwards and Arciero,

I write today to join with the Massachusetts Access to Counsel Coalition, a broad-based coalition of over 240 organizations, **to urge the Housing Committee to report favorably S. 864, An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts.**

S. 864 would establish a statewide Access to Counsel Program for income eligible low-income tenants and landlord owner-occupants in eviction proceedings.

Providing vulnerable people with access to legal representation in the eviction process needs to be part of a comprehensive housing solution to keep people stably housed.

Evictions put a strain on our people and our community and threaten to irreparably damage the diversity that makes our community so vibrant and joyful. In East Boston, we have seen families forced to rent rooms with individuals and families they barely know in order to not go homeless.

For families facing eviction, **legal representation is a life line.** It is frightening to receive an eviction notice and daunting to represent yourself in court, especially where the other side has a lawyer and you do not. In the community that we serve in Boston, only 5% of tenants are represented by a lawyer, while over 90% of landlords are represented.

Four states and 17 cities across the country have passed programs to provide tenants with representation in eviction proceedings. It's time for Massachusetts to do the same.

We hope that the Housing Committee will take action early in the 2023-24 session to report **S. 864** out favorably.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Justin Pasquariello".

**J. Justin Pasquariello, Executive Director**  
East Boston Social Centers  
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