

## Renters of color face obstacles in renting at every step of the process, from applications to evictions.

### Applications

Black renters face deep discrimination trying to rent a home.<sup>1</sup> Studies have found that in Boston, Black renters experienced discrimination in 71% of cases.<sup>2</sup> Section 8 renters faced discrimination in 86% of cases, which is significant given nearly 2/3 of public housing tenants in Mass are people of color.<sup>3</sup>

### Fees

Black and Latinx renters typically report submitting more rental applications than white and Asian renters and were almost twice as likely to report submitting five rental applications or more.<sup>4</sup> Renters of color also report paying a higher median application fee than white renters.<sup>5</sup>

### Evictions

According to a recent report, Black renters in Massachusetts are 2.4 times more likely to have an eviction filed against them than white renters.<sup>6</sup> During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 70% of all eviction filings in Boston occurred in census tracts where most renters were people of color, even though less than half of all Boston's rental housing (47%) is in these neighborhoods.<sup>7</sup>

### In Court

As of June 2021, 47% of eviction cases handled as part of a temporary Massachusetts COVID eviction legal help project were on behalf of people of color.<sup>8</sup> Black people accounted for 24% of cases, despite making up only 9% of the state's population.<sup>9</sup> People identifying as Hispanic ethnicity accounted for 23% of cases, despite making up only 12.4% of the state's population.<sup>10</sup>

### Right to Counsel's Approach

Right to Counsel (RTC) 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 RTC Coalition has broad based support consisting of over 200 diverse organizations including municipal leaders, property owners & health care workers.

**“As a Black person...you feel like you're constantly fighting...fighting for your job, fighting for your education, now you're fighting to live in your home.”<sup>11</sup>**

Alyce P., tenant, City Life/Vida Urbana September 21, 2021

**As of August 16<sup>th</sup>, of the 115,000 households in Massachusetts that were behind on rent, 73% were people of color.<sup>12</sup>**

National Equity Atlas  
Accessed September 21, 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. Both Milwaukee, WI and Louisville, KY plan to launch their right to counsel programs with ARPA funding.

### 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**

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- <sup>1</sup> Brentin Mock, “Why Won’t Ben Carson Confront Discrimination?”, CityLab, September 13, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-13/why-the-rent-is-so-damn-higher-for-african-americans>
- <sup>2</sup> Simon Rios, “Study: Black Renters in Boston Face Deep Discrimination. Subsidized Renters Face Even More,” WBUR, July 1, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2020/07/01/study-black-renters-in-boston-face-deep-discrimination-subsidized-renters-face-even-more>
- <sup>3</sup> Id. See also MassNAHRO, “Be a Local Hero: Save Public Housing,” <https://massnahro.org/page/save-public-housing>
- <sup>4</sup> Manny Garcia & Edward Berchick, “Renters: Results from the Zillow Consumer Housing Trends Report 2021,” Zillow Research, August 10, 2021, <https://www.zillow.com/research/renters-consumer-housing-trends-report-2021-29863/>
- <sup>5</sup> Id.
- <sup>6</sup> Sophie Beiers, Sandra Park, Linda Morris, ACLU, “Clearing the Record: How Eviction Sealing Laws Can Advance Housing Access for Women of Color,” January 10, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/clearing-the-record-how-eviction-sealing-laws-can-advance-housing-access-for-women-of-color/>
- <sup>7</sup> Ben Walker & City Life/Vida Urbana, “Housing Justice is the Cure: Evictions in Boston’s Communities of Color During COVID-19,” (2021), [https://www.covidevictions.org/?utm\\_campaign=report\\_release\\_9\\_2021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=clvu](https://www.covidevictions.org/?utm_campaign=report_release_9_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=clvu)
- <sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, 2021. CELHP Case Data Through 6/30/2021 [hereinafter CELHP data].
- <sup>9</sup> Id. See also United States Census, QuickFacts Massachusetts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MA> [hereinafter U.S. Census QuickFacts].
- <sup>10</sup> CELHP Data, U.S. Census QuickFacts.
- <sup>11</sup> Report Webinar: “Housing Justice is the Cure: Evictions in Boston’s Communities of Color During COVID-19”, September 21, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/citylifeboston/>
- <sup>12</sup> National Equity Atlas, Rent Debt in America: Stabilizing Renters is Key to Equitable Recovery, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>