



May 9, 2023

Dear Chairs Eldridge and Day:

The Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) is a membership-based non-profit organization based in Boston, with thousands of members and supporters statewide. Guided by Jewish teachings and values, we are devoted to the defense of civil rights, the preservation of constitutional liberties, and the passionate pursuit of social, economic, environmental, and racial justice for all people.

JALSA wishes to offer its testimony in strong support of **H. 1731, An Act Promoting Access to Counsel and Housing Stability in Massachusetts**. It is a profound injustice that, while 86% of landlords are represented by counsel in eviction cases, only 11.5% of tenants are represented by counsel, disproportionately harming tenants who are low-income, women, and people of color. It is particularly egregious that more than 1 in 4 children living in poverty experience eviction by age 15.

We need to level the playing field. Doing this is sensible – it saves landlords the costs of evictions, it saves the Commonwealth having to figure out how to house people who have lost their homes, and it lives up to our highest ideals of making sure that people are safely and securely housed.

Our basic human decency dictates that we do all we can to avoid eviction. Reaching back thousands of years, our faith-based values

have impressed upon us that housing is a right, and that we must take all steps that we can to protect tenants from eviction. Upholding human dignity, the fundamental Jewish value of kavod habriyot, demands that we ensure such protections for vulnerable populations.

JALSA would also like to offer its vocal support for **H. 1690 / S. 956, An Act Promoting Housing Opportunity and Mobility Through Eviction Sealing (the HOMES Act)**. This legislation follows similar tenant protections implemented in many other states. It would eliminate the stigma of a past eviction record that some prospective tenants face when seeking housing.

Additionally, JALSA expresses its support for **H. 1682 / S. 1048, An Act Relative to Summary Process and Rental Assistance**, which will further provide housing stability by preventing unnecessary evictions.

JALSA strongly urges the members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary to report:

*An Act Promoting Access to Counsel and Housing Stability in Massachusetts;*

*An Act Promoting Housing Opportunity and Mobility Through Eviction Sealing; and,*

*An Act Relative to Summary Process and Rental Assistance* favorably out of committee.

Sincerely,



Cindy Rowe

Executive Director

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action