



We have joined together as some of the largest property managers and property owners in Massachusetts to call for a right to counsel for tenants.

Why?

Many who have lost their sources of income and health benefits—during this trying time. The most vulnerable communities, people of color and non-English speakers, will be affected and many do not know their legal rights or how to protect themselves both before court and in court.

Legal help and access to the right resources at the right time can prevent families from homelessness, prevent illegal or unnecessary evictions, prevent displacement, and create a path to housing stability that will strengthen all of our communities for the future.

Eviction cases move fast and intimidating, a right to counsel would help prevent unbalanced and unfair results while also working toward housing stability.

**A right to counsel is a critical tool that we need to put in place now before the tidal wave hits the housing court.** Sending tenants into court mediation or court hearings - especially virtual hearings will be untenable for most unrepresented tenants, 93% of whom are unrepresented.

A right to counsel will prevent housing instability because it focuses on creating the right continuum of legal assistance and housing stability, it acknowledges that different stages call for different levels of legal involvement.

We applaud the work that Legislative leaders did to pass an eviction moratorium and to provide crucial emergency assistance funding that assists families at risk of losing their rental housing.

As we face this pandemic together over the next year, we urge you to take quick steps to pass a statewide right to counsel pilot program and assist vulnerable residents facing the loss of their home in court. **We cannot emphasize how urgent this is to do now.**

Thank you.

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