

Executive Director
Jirandy Martinez, MPA

Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing

Deputy Executive
Director
Luis Zarate

The Community Resource Center supports Funding for a Statewide Right to Counsel (S2721/A1493). The Community Resource Center (CRC) also known as the Hispanic Resource Center is a community based organization founded in 1998. The CRC serves and empowers immigrant and low-income families in Westchester County.

Board of Directors

Chair
Carol Pouchie

The CRC is a proud member of the movement for Statewide Right to Counsel. Over the years, we have helped hundreds of low-income, mostly Hispanic, maintain and improve their housing in Mamaroneck, NY and surrounding areas in Westchester.

Treasurer
Luisa Fuentes

In 2017, the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants eviction in New York City. The coalition is now working with over 100 statewide partners to pass a Right to Counsel for ALL New Yorkers and transform housing court from an “eviction machine” to a place that holds landlords accountable, upholds tenants’ rights, and enables tenants to remain in their homes.

Secretary
Nina Recio Cuddy

Our partners and other members of the Housing Courts Must Change! campaign collectively represent tens of thousands of tenants across New York State and are honored to be working on permanent and transformative solutions to New York’s eviction crisis. In 2022, the New York Court system’s website reported that 7,575 evictions were filed in Westchester County-3,424 or 45% of those were in Yonkers. The ratio of filings to tenants’ households shows a more problematic situation. According to the data, in 2019, 1 in 6 rental units eviction filing in Mt. Vernon, and 1 in 8 rental units eviction filing in Yonkers.

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Our statewide Right to Counsel legislation (S2721/A1493), introduced by Assembly Member Latoya Joyner and Senator Rachel May, would ensure that every tenant in New York State has the right to a lawyer when facing eviction and:

Ex-Officio
Liz Liscio
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- Covers every tenant across the state, regardless of income.
- Covers any legal proceeding that could result in a tenant losing their home.
- Requires that tenants be represented throughout their entire case, not just when they show up in court.
- This includes legal advice, advocacy, and assistance.
- Requires the State to contract with nonprofit legal services organizations to provide Right to Counsel and
- nonprofit community-based organizations to provide tenants’ rights education and tenant organizing.

New York State’s eviction crisis will only get worse if we don’t enact solutions that strengthen tenants’

rights and empower tenants to fight for their homes. Passing and funding statewide Right to Counsel would do just that. Right to Counsel is proven to prevent displacement – 84 percent of tenants in New York City who had a Right to Counsel lawyer won their case, and the seven U.S. cities that passed Right to Counsel as of 2021 have seen up to a 77 percent reduction in evictions. Right to Counsel is critical to upholding ALL tenants’ rights: without an attorney, it’s much harder for tenants to raise available defenses, and ensure all their rights are respected in their homes and in the courts. Finally, we know that keeping people in their homes is vastly less expensive than the state having to pick up care for people who become homeless. In fact, Statewide Right to Counsel will save our state an estimated \$3-6 for every dollar invested!

To comprehensively transform our court system and keep New York tenants in their homes in New York, we need a fully funded Statewide Right to Counsel. Our budget proposal lays out the need, in the FY 2024 budget, for \$172 million that will enable the first year of Statewide Right to Counsel’s implementation. We need this funding to ensure that our residents can be protected from the ever-increasing efforts to displace them from their homes.

We urge you to support the full funding and passage of Right to Counsel in this year’s budget. As a society, we cannot stand by any longer while New Yorkers are forced into a confusing, overwhelming, and traumatizing court system without counsel by their side. No one should have to face something as devastating as eviction without even the most basic right to representation. We know that establishing this right will keep New Yorkers in their homes, prevent many long-lasting harms to our families and communities, and save our state money. Our state has every reason to pass and fund S2721/A1493 in the budget this year, and we count on your leadership to ensure this happens.

Sincerely,



Jirandy Martinez
Executive Director
Community Resource Center