



**Legislative Budget
Hearing on Housing
February 14, 2024**

Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition Testimony on Urgent Need to Fund and Pass Statewide Right to Counsel (S2721)

Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition is a proud member of [the Right to Counsel Coalition](#), which unites tenants, organizers, legal services providers, unions, faith communities and many others who are working to ensure that all New Yorkers across the state have a Right to Counsel when facing eviction. We and members of our [Housing Courts Must Change! Campaign](#) collectively represent tens of thousands of tenants across New York State and are honored to work on permanent and transformative solutions to New York's eviction crisis. The Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition (HCHC) strongly supports the right to counsel for low-income tenants in addressing housing disparities. As a Black-led tenants' rights organization, we serve historically-Black communities in Columbia, Greene, and Albany counties. Our mission encompasses advocating for rent control, divestment from over-policing and mass incarceration, and reinvestment in social services and affordable housing. Through supporting the right to counsel, we work to level the playing field for low-income tenants and promote fairness and justice in housing matters.

Passing the Right to Counsel (RTC) and securing funding this year would be transformative for our community, particularly for formerly incarcerated individuals and low-income tenants. Engaging with the legal system can be traumatic for those with past incarceration experiences, and having access to counsel would provide crucial support. Similarly, for low-income tenants facing housing disputes, RTC would ensure fair representation and stability. By prioritizing RTC and funding, we can empower those in need and create a more just society.

We urge you to support the funding and passage of Right to Counsel in the budget this year. As a society, we cannot stand by any longer while New Yorkers are forced into a confusing and traumatizing court system without counsel by their side, and as a result, face devastating consequences that could've been avoided. We know that establishing this right will keep New Yorkers in their homes, prevent an array of long-lasting harms to our families and communities, and save our state money in the long-term. New York has every reason to pass and fund S2721 in the budget this year, and we count on your leadership to ensure this happens.