



Dear Councilmember,

Today, United Way of Greater Toledo **urges our City Councilmembers to support and pass** the proposed “Right to Counsel” legislation, which will ensure that Toledoans have access to the legal resources they deserve when facing an eviction.

A common misconception about our legal system is that every person who finds themselves in a courtroom is entitled to a lawyer, and if they cannot afford a lawyer, they will be provided with legal counsel. This is not the case for Housing Court, where a person who faces an eviction must pay for representation or, if they cannot afford this service, will simply have to represent themselves.

***This has led to an unfair, inequitable outcome of evictions***, based simply on who in our community has the economic resources to handle their concerns in a court of law. For example, a study from the Fair Housing Center notes that roughly 6,000 evictions are filed every year in Toledo. If each of those households contain two to three family members, this means 12,000 to 18,000 individuals — adults, children, seniors — are impacted by an eviction filing. Of those, about 2 percent of defendants (evictees) are represented by an attorney, while more than 70 percent of plaintiffs (landlords) are represented by an attorney.

This report also outlines the troubling fact that, *“The City of Toledo is required to complete a local Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice...The AI specifically identifies the eviction crisis as an impediment to Fair Housing Choice because it **disproportionately impacts people of color and especially women with children.**”*

United Way of Greater Toledo has long-advocated for working mothers and created community partnerships that mitigate financial distresses for residents which keep families, especially those with children, in their homes. Housing consistency and youth remaining in the same residence for an extended period of time has direct correlation with lowering school absenteeism and increasing long-term graduation rates.

Lastly, through our collected call data via United Way 2-1-1, here in Lucas County alone, there have been 4,232 requests for rental assistance in the last year. This showcases the deep financial needs of our community members, who are struggling to remain housed. If families are having difficulty paying rent, they more-than-likely are struggling to afford other basic needs. Therefore, the likelihood to compensate legal counsel during their eviction hearing is slim. Whether a person is indeed behind on



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their rent, withholding their rent because of inhabitable living conditions or a neglectful landlord — ***individuals still deserve to have their cases heard by, and articulated by, a professional who understands our very complex legal system.*** As a lawyer myself, this is a fundamental right I firmly stand behind.

By passing Right to Counsel, we can ensure that every person in our city has equal representation before the court and that Toledo families, specifically our most economically vulnerable, are offered legal assistance during such an incredibly difficult time.

We look forward to serving as your ally, as we work ***together*** to solve these deep-rooted issues. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

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