



Councilmembers; Chairperson Adams and Vice Chair Gadus, my name is Lucas Camuso-Stall, and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy at United Way of Greater Toledo and also a proud resident of the City of Toledo.

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

Our colleagues at the Fair Housing Center note 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.

I think it is important to again note that: Of those eviction filings, about 2 percent of defendants (evictees) are represented by an attorney, while more than 70 percent of plaintiffs (landlords) are represented by an attorney.

And study after study shows us that the eviction crisis, which is happening in cities all across the U.S., **disproportionately impacts people of color and especially women with children**.

Lastly, through our collected call data via United Way 2-1-1, here in Lucas County, there have been 4,717 requests for rental assistance in the past year alone. 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.

Let’s also note that this ordinance is being put before you all with **great timeliness**.



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With eviction moratoriums expiring, **we will see** an exponential increase in families being filed through Housing Court.

As we continue to battle this pandemic; as Toledoans struggle to find liveable-wage work to afford their rent; Council has an opportunity to **balance the scales** by ensuring that fair eviction court hearings are occurring in our city.

Morally, we can no longer stand by and expect our neighbors to articulate a legal defense for themselves while they fear that their belongings — **their bed, their clothes, their family photos** — may soon be thrown to the curb.

Without accessible legal representation for our most economically vulnerable residents, we are **allowing inequitable proceedings to take place** before the court.

Your constituents **deserve** to have their cases heard by, and articulated by, a professional who understands our very complex legal system.

By passing Right to Counsel, we can ensure that **Toledoans have equal representation before the court**, and that adults, and families, 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, and again, pass Right to Counsel.



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