

For immediate release:

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**Connecticut Legal Services announces services under
Connecticut's Right to Counsel program**

Connecticut Legal Services (CLS) expands its legal assistance to tenants facing eviction, as part of Connecticut's transformative Right to Counsel (RTC) program. In this first phase of the program, which launched on January 31, 2022, CLS is providing RTC related eviction defense for tenants living in the following high eviction zip codes: 06610 (Bridgeport), 06710 (Waterbury), 06226 (Willimantic), 06239 (Danielson), and 06260 (Putnam); and will implement its RTC legal services in additional areas across the state as the program progresses.

Housing instability has been a long-standing issue in Connecticut. According to a report by the Eviction Lab at Princeton University, Bridgeport and Waterbury are among multiple Connecticut cities with the highest eviction rates in the country. Mary A. Conklin, the managing attorney of the housing unit at CLS, noted, "Our clients have always struggled to find and maintain affordable housing, even with their rental subsidies. The pandemic has made it much worse. With rising rent prices across the state, our clients are struggling more than ever to avoid homelessness. This struggle highlights the importance of protecting tenants' rights."

As a result, Connecticut became the second state in the country to pass Right to Counsel legislation, establishing an affirmative right to counsel for tenants at risk of eviction. "The importance of this groundbreaking legislation cannot be understated" says Deborah Witkin, the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Services, adding "this is a way to help address the housing instability which threatens the safety of the most vulnerable populations, including children, elderly, and those living in poverty. Families who are evicted often end up homeless or in shelters. This drastic change in environment is a traumatic event for children in particular who struggle to focus in school as their home life crumbles. "

CLS is proud to join Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services in this coordinated legal effort to help tenants under the Right to Counsel Program administered by the Connecticut Bar Foundation. Anyone needing

assistance should call the Right to Counsel hotline at 1-800-559-1565 to determine their eligibility for services.

About Connecticut Legal Services

CLS is the largest legal services agency in the state. CLS has provided access to justice and protected the critical civil legal rights of low-income individuals and families through representation, systemic advocacy, advice, collaboration, and education for over four decades.
