



Lawyers' Committee
for Better Housing

40 Years of Housing Justice

PRESS RELEASE

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Chicago Department of Housing awards Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing \$7.1 million to provide lawyers to renters facing eviction

Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH) today announced it will receive a \$7.1 million three-year grant from the City of Chicago Department of Housing (DOH) to represent tenants in eviction court. LCBH, and its partners Legal Aid Chicago and CARPLS, will provide brief advice and full legal representation at no cost to eligible low-income tenants at risk of eviction in Chicago.

The grant is part of a three-year, \$8 million, Right to Counsel Pilot Program (RTC). The program recognizes that one of the leading interventions to preventing evictions is providing legal assistance to at-risk tenants. When renters face the loss of their home in housing court, legal representation makes a critical difference. In eviction lawsuits nationwide, an estimated 90% of landlords have legal representation, while only 10% of tenants do. Unrepresented renters are much more likely to lose their cases, and their homes, regardless of the merits of their case.

"We are excited that the Chicago Department of Housing has chosen Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing to pilot this program. With this investment, Chicago moves closer to joining New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and other major cities and states that have formally adopted a Right to Counsel in eviction court," said Mark Swartz, Executive Director of Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing. "This project will allow us and our partners to expand our free legal and supportive services that help stabilize tenants with limited incomes who might otherwise become homeless."

Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing's proposal was selected based on its plan to build on an already established initiative. The Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt's (CCLAHD) Early Resolution Program provides brief services to help tenants and landlords resolve evictions. The RTC grant allows LCBH and its partners to represent tenants if the tenant and landlord are not able to settle their differences through the ERP services. Tenants may access counsel directly through the CCLAHD program or through advertising to the general public or by calling LCBH and its partners directly.

The program will prioritize serving low -income renters in Chicago who were impacted by COVID-19 and are now facing eviction. Mark Swartz added, “We project representing a significant number of tenants as LCBH and our partners in the Early Resolution Program are operating at full capacity.”

While the Right to Counsel grant directly benefits tenants, it’s intended impact is much broader. According to Michelle Gilbert, LCBH’s Legal Director, “Eviction court is a lose-lose situation for all involved. Our goal is to dissuade landlords from filing cases and, thus, prevent evictions. The pandemic has taught us that prevention is better than treatment and that anyone can be at risk of eviction. Rental assistance puts money in the pockets of landlords – evictions take it away. Preventing evictions will help make housing more affordable.”

More information about Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing’s free legal and supportive services can be found at www.lcbh.org and www.rentervention.com and the Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt program at <https://www.cookcountylegalaid.org/>.

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About:

The **Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing (LCBH)** is the only legal aid agency in the Chicago area that advocates solely for renters. LCBH combines legal services with education, outreach, supportive services and policy initiatives, so families can move from a path leading to homelessness to one of safe and stable housing. More at www.lcbh.org.

Legal Aid Chicago seeks justice for people living in poverty. Through litigation and advocacy, our 200 person team of full-time lawyers, paralegals, and staff fight to secure individual rights to fair working conditions, health care, and access to affordable and safe housing, just to name a few. It is our vision that poverty will not impede justice. Our goal is for laws and legal systems to be open and equally effective for all who need their protection, especially those who experience unfair and disproportionately unjust treatment due to personal or community characteristics.

CARPLS is Cook County’s largest provider of free legal services. Founded in 1993, CARPLS has helped one million low- and moderate-income residents find solutions to their everyday legal matters, including housing, consumer, family law issues, and more. www.carpls.org.

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