



Testimony in Support of Right to Counsel Legislation

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to the
Joint Committee on the Judiciary
Massachusetts General Court

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is David Bryant, and I am the Director of Advocacy, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC). Thank you for the opportunity to express MACDC's strong support for the collective efforts of Senator Sal DiDomenico, Representatives Chynah Tyler, David Rogers and Michael Day, and the members of The Right to Counsel (RTC) Coalition who are working to ensure fair and equitable treatment for low-income tenants and families facing an eviction.

MACDC is an association of mission-driven community development organizations dedicated to working together and with others to create opportunities for people of diverse incomes and backgrounds to access housing that is affordable, benefit from economic opportunities, and fully participate in the civic life of their communities.

Today, the Joint Committee on the Judiciary will receive testimony on several bills (S.913, H.1537, and H.3456) that would promote access to resources, education and support for individuals and families at risk of losing their homes. Evictions are rising – 40, 948 eviction cases were filed in FY2018, and the resulting impacts are devastating to tenants, families, and communities. At this time, the deck is stacked against tenants; more than 90% of tenants are forced to fight eviction without an attorney, while most landlords have the advice and support of counsel. And a modest effort to level the terms to preserve a tenancy and prevent eviction could save cities and towns and the Commonwealth millions annually, decreasing the costs of sheltering or subsidizing individuals and families who are displaced.

Our members are dedicated to creating places of opportunity across the state where all people can live with dignity while participating in and benefitting from our Commonwealth's economy. We respectfully request that the Committee review the bills that have been presented and report favorably a "hybrid RTC bill," which combines the best elements of each bill and meets the principles outlined by the RTC Coalition in furtherance of justice in eviction proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,

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