

EXPAND RENTER PROTECTIONS

Affordable, stable, and accessible housing and robust housing choice are the foundation upon which just and equitable communities are built but the power imbalance between renters and landlords puts renters at greater risk of housing instability, harassment, and homelessness, and it fuels racial inequity.

Congress should enact legislation to establish vital renter protections to:

- Prohibit source of income discrimination to help ensure that landlords do not discriminate against renters with rental assistance or other sources of income.
- Establish and fund a national right to counsel to help more renters stay in their homes and mitigate harm when eviction is unavoidable.
- Create “just cause” eviction protections to ensure greater housing stability and prevent arbitrary and harmful actions by landlords.
- Expand the Fair Housing Act to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and source of income.
- Increase unrestricted resources for legal services.
- Ensure access for people exiting the criminal legal system by ending arbitrary screening and eviction policies, including prohibiting blanket bans and one-strike policies.
- Bar federally-assisted landlords from screening out applicants or evicting tenants because of the actions of an abuser and from retaliating against a tenant for calling emergency assistance for help, and ensure survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking have access to safe, accessible homes and the ability to leave unsafe housing situations without risking possible homelessness.
- Provide housing resources to all income-eligible households, regardless of immigration status.
- Establish anti-rent gouging protections for renters and require landlords to disclose any and all fees in advance of lease signing.
- Discourage speculators from driving up housing costs.
- Regulate tenant and credit reporting agencies and ban them from including eviction-related information that did not result in a judgement against the renter, or that occurred during the pandemic, and all other eviction-related information after 3 years.
- Support tenant organizing.
- Establish the right of tenants to renew leases and for first right of purchase.

Why?

- Fewer than 10% of renters have access to legal counsel when facing eviction, compared to 90% of landlords. In communities with right to counsel, 86% of renters were able to remain in their homes, and eviction filings decreased by 10%.
- In many states, landlords can evict renters for no reason, and there are no federal protections against arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions or other abusive practices by landlords.
- Discrimination by landlords against renters prevents households from effectively using federal, state, or local rental assistance, and is often a pretext for illegal discrimination against renters of color, women, and people with disabilities.
- Black women are evicted at alarming rates. In 17 states, black women are evicted at twice the rate as white renters.
- Landlords often evict survivors of domestic or intimate partner violence because of the actions of their abusers, or refuse to rent to survivors, putting them at greater risk of housing instability and homelessness.
- Evictions haunt renters for years, pushing households into deeper poverty.

For more information, contact NLIHC Vice President of Public Policy Sarah Saadian at ssaadian@nlihc.org and NLIHC Policy Analyst Alayna Calabro at acalabro@nlihc.org.