

## STRENGTHEN AND ENFORCE RENTER PROTECTIONS

**M**ore than ever, bold action is needed to create clear, strong, and enforceable renter protections at the local, state, and national level. Rents are sky high, eviction filings are up, and homelessness has increased to its highest level on record. The power imbalance between renters and landlords continues to fuel racial and social inequities and put renters at greater risk of housing instability, eviction, harassment, and homelessness. Tenant protections are needed to build tenant power, advance racial equity, and achieve housing justice.

Discriminatory tenant screening practices can prevent tenants from accessing safe, stable, and affordable housing opportunities, and a host of arbitrary rental fees – or “junk” fees can strain a tenant’s household budget, creating a cycle of housing unaffordability for tenants everywhere. In many communities, landlords can evict tenant for no reason, with only a few days’ notice. Eviction courts provide only the thinnest veil of due process for tenants. Tenants often endure landlord harassment, discrimination, and unlivable living conditions with few options for recourse against their landlords.

Tenants of color, disabled tenants, families with children, and older tenants – whose rental housing options are limited by historical segregation and present-day discrimination – are most harmed by the failure to protect tenants. They experience eviction at higher rates than others and are more likely to live in substandard or inaccessible homes.

Despite these challenges, tenants and advocates nationwide have led successful campaigns to restore rights to renters. Since 2020, advocates have successfully won and implemented [300 local and state renter protections](#) at the state and local levels. These protections are critical, but they provide a patchwork of safeguards, leaving many renters without basic legal rights.

### Federal Solutions

---

Tenants need a national solution to meet the scale of this problem to ensure that all renters have the rights they deserve. Congress should enact robust renter protections, including those in the [National Tenants Bill of Rights](#).

The National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Housing Law Project, and Tenant Union Federal created the [National Tenants Bill of Rights](#) to shift the balance of power between tenants and landlords, redress long-standing racial and social inequities, and advance housing justice. When enacted, it will establish, strengthen, and enforce vital rental protections, building on the tremendous success of advocates nationwide who have helped enact or implement nearly [300 local and state renter protections](#) over the past few years.

The National Tenants Bill of Rights also builds on the historic and effective leadership of national tenant organizations, such as the National Alliance of HUD Tenants. It was written with direct input from tenant leaders and people with lived experience, including NLIHC's Tenant Collective and Tenant Talk Live participants, and NLIHC's ERASE and State and Local Tenant Protection working groups.

[Learn more](#) about how to build support for a National Tenants Bill of Rights.

## State and Local Solutions

While designed to shape action at the federal level, the principles within the National Tenants Bill of Rights can be applied to strengthen and enforce tenants' rights in states and localities. Local and state governments are in the best position to act quickly to enact and implement tenant protections, such as source of income and just cause eviction protections, habitability and accessibility standards, and anti-rent gouging measures.

NLIHC's State and Local Innovation Team leads a Tenant Protections Network to help advocates and tenant leaders across the nation advance state and local tenant protections in their communities. Advocates can [join](#) the Tenant Protections Network to share best practices and learn more about ways to build political support for renter protections.

## Did you know?

- **Fewer than 3% of renters have access to legal counsel when facing eviction**, compared to 81% 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 Senior Vice President of Public Policy [Sarah Saadian](#) at [ssaadian@nlihc.org](mailto:ssaadian@nlihc.org), or NLIHC Vice President of State and Local Innovation [Sarah Gallagher](#) at [sgallagher@nlihc.org](mailto:sgallagher@nlihc.org).