



## Please SUPPORT SB19-180 Eviction Legal Defense Fund *Senator Winter & Representative McCluskie*

**The Problem:** According to the Legal Services Corporation, 86% of the civil legal problems reported by low-income Americans in 2017 received inadequate or no legal help. In Colorado, this justice gap is particularly harmful for renters.<sup>1</sup> Low-income tenants who are facing a possible eviction are typically unable to access legal assistance. For tenants who represent themselves in court, navigating the complex legal system of landlord-tenant laws can prove to be an impossible task. This major shortcoming in our legal process contributes to cycles of poverty throughout the state of Colorado.

**The Solution:** The Colorado General Assembly shall appropriate general funds to provide legal resources for low-income Coloradans who are facing an eviction.

*Legal representation for low-income tenants at risk for eviction is critical, but available legal assistance is severely lacking.*

- There were nearly 45,000 evictions filed in Colorado in 2017.
- According to a 2017 study by Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and Colorado Center on Law and Policy, less than 1% of tenants in Denver County were represented by an attorney during an eviction, while nearly 90% of landlords were represented. However, the very few tenants able to access an attorney were significantly more likely to remain in their homes.<sup>2</sup>
- At least half of those seeking assistance from Colorado Legal Services are turned away because of lack of resources.<sup>3</sup>
- A nationwide study found that there is one legal aid lawyer for every 6,415 people in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

*Eviction hurts families and communities.*

- One study indicated that renters who had previously experienced involuntary displacement were almost 25 percent more likely to face long-term housing challenges than renters who had not.<sup>5</sup>
- Housing is a social determinant of health. After an eviction, renters are pushed into less-desirable neighborhoods — where they may experience substandard housing conditions, poorer health outcomes, and increased poverty.<sup>6</sup>
- Housing instability for tenants with children may also destabilize family relationships, children's achievement and community ties — disrupting children's development and leading to poor academic performance, behavioral problems, substance abuse, and homelessness later in life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Need of Low-Income Americans," Legal Services Corporation, (June, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> "[Facing Eviction Alone](#): A Study of Evictions in Denver 2014-2016," Aubrey Hasvold and Jack Regenbogen, Colorado Center on Law and Policy and Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, (2017).

<sup>3</sup> "Expanding Colorado's Right to Counsel in Civil Cases – A Modest Proposal," Taubman, Daniel M., The Colorado Lawyer, Vol. 36, No. 7, Page 95, (2007), [http://www.cba.cobar.org/tcl/tcl\\_articles.cfm?articleid=5159](http://www.cba.cobar.org/tcl/tcl_articles.cfm?articleid=5159)

<sup>4</sup> "Documenting the Justice Gap in America: The Current Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans 11," Legal Services Corporation, (2009).

<sup>5</sup> M. Desmond, C. Gershenson, and B. Kiviat, "[Forced Relocation and Residential Instability among Urban Renters](#)," (2015),

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

**For more information, please contact:**

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## Support for Eviction Legal Defense Fund

9to5 Colorado	Interfaith Alliance of Colorado
All Families Deserve a Chance Coalition	Lutheran Advocacy Ministry—Colorado
Arc Thriftstores	Mental Health Colorado
Atlantis Community, Inc.	Mile High Connects
Bayaud Enterprises	NAACP CO-MT-WY State Conference
B-Konnected	The Arc of Adams County
Boulder Rights Watch	The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties
Colorado Catholic Conference	The Arc of Aurora
Colorado Center on Law and Policy	The Arc of Colorado
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	The Arc of Central Mountains
Colorado Council of Churches	The Arc of Grand Junction
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition	The Arc of Larimer County
Colorado Fiscal Institute	The Arc of Pikes Peak
Colorado Lawyers Committee	The Arc of Southwest
Colorado Poverty Law Project	The Arc of Weld County
CWEE	The Association for Community Living in Boulder County
Denver Homeless Out Loud	The Denver Foundation
Denver Metro Fair Housing Center	The Independence Center
Enterprise Community Partners	