

# Renters shouldn't have to go it alone.



## SB 1: *Right to Representation for Low-Income Renters*

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Townsend

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Introduced on January 19, 2023, Senate Bill 1 creates a right to representation for low-income renters in eviction actions. The disruptive displacement that comes with eviction proceedings has **well-documented and long-lasting negative effects on the lives of children and families**, including poorer physical and mental health, increased risk of homelessness and loss of employment, and poorer academic performance. It disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx families, and it also creates **significant increased costs for state and local government** including funding for shelter, education, transportation for homeless youth, and foster care.

Currently, most Delaware renters must navigate the complex eviction process by themselves. In our state, **86% of landlords have representation in court eviction proceedings, while only 2% of renters do**. Providing representation would help low-income renters navigate the eviction process and possibly avoid homelessness, while creating significant cost savings to our state. Experts estimate that **every dollar invested in a right to representation program would save the state at least \$2.76**. This program benefits both renters and landlords by facilitating negotiations, reducing the need for formal court hearings, and helping more landlords receive the money they're owed from renters who have fallen behind.

### What does the bill do?

- Creates a right to representation for low-income renters facing eviction whose household income is lower than 200% of federal poverty guidelines.
- Requires landlords to provide notice of the right to representation at certain designated intervals of a tenancy and in eviction proceedings.
- Exempts small landlords who own three or fewer units *and* are not represented by a lawyer or agent.
- Creates an Eviction Diversion Program designed to help resolve payment or other issues after a landlord files for eviction, which will be run by the Justice of the Peace (“JP”) Court.
- Enables the Attorney General to contract with appropriate legal service organizations to provide representation in proceedings covered by the bill.
- Places coordination of the program with Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, which will manage the contracts.

Learn more at the Delaware Right to Representation for Eviction Defense  
Campaign home page: [www.aclu-de.org/en/delaware-right-to-representation](http://www.aclu-de.org/en/delaware-right-to-representation)

