

ORGANIZING FOR POLICIES THAT PROTECT TENANTS

Why organize for tenant protections?

For many of us, policy-making feels out of reach. It seems like other people - politicians, government agencies, landlords, or corporations - are the one who determine what happens in our everyday lives. But when we engage in policy, we're able to make change for ourselves and our communities. Policies that get implemented at the city, state, and federal level impact us. Why not have a role in shaping them?



Policies that benefit renters

Rent Control

Rent control regulates how much a landlord can charge you for rent from one year to the next. In many places, rent is determined by the city (or a board set by the city). Sometimes rent control comes with additional tenant protections, such as a right to a lease renewal or a right to have family members succeed your apartment. Rent control

is one of the most powerful legislative tools a tenant can have—it protects and preserves the community from additional speculation, preserves affordability in the neighborhood for the long term, and ensures your ability to stay in the community in the long term. To learn more

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about rent control, visit the Homes for All [Rent Control for All](#) campaign page.

Just Cause Eviction

In many cities, landlords don't need a reason to evict tenants once their lease expires. "Just Cause" legislation requires a landlord to provide a reason for bringing an eviction lawsuit against a tenant. The reasons are set by the government (examples include non-payment of rent). This type of legislation also protects the tenant's right to organize without fear. For more information, visit the [Policy Link All-In-Cities Toolkit](#).

"Just cause" eviction protects tenants from being evicted without a reason.

Anti-harassment protections

Some cities have anti-harassment laws, which make it illegal for landlords to harass or retaliate against tenants. In addition to physical and verbal harassment, these laws can define harassment as denial of repairs, heat and hot water, or any other tactic that leads to tenants being harassed out of the building. New York City now has a new pilot program which requires a ["Certificate of No Harassment"](#) which requires landlords to prove they aren't harassing tenants before they are able to get a building construction permit.

Tenant Right to Purchase

In Washington D.C., the [Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act](#) gives renters the first right to purchase a building that is being sold, before a new owner can purchase it. This would allow a renter, tenant association, or even a community based organization to assist a tenant in purchasing their home before it goes on the market for sale. This is a powerful law for tenant associations that would like to take over management of their building.

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Right to Counsel



In the U.S., the right to an attorney if you're charged with a crime is guaranteed. In New York City, there is a "right to counsel" requirement which guarantees an attorney for people at risk of eviction. The Right to Counsel campaign has a [toolkit](#) which is a resource for other cities that would like to pass similar legislation.

Regulating Short Term Rentals

With the increase in demand for hotels or short term stays, property owners in high cost cities often convert residential units into full time hotels or short term rental housing. This jeopardizes current tenants who are at risk of eviction. It also decreases the supply of affordable housing in a market where housing is already scarce. Cities are starting to take action to protect tenants at risk. For example, the [city of Boston](#) has legislation which bans short term rentals except in the case where an owner lives in the building.