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## **Supervisor Dean Preston Holds Hearing on Implementation for Right to Counsel Law**

**SAN FRANCISCO** — Eviction rates are down, and more than 700 San Francisco households who faced eviction in the past six months were able to stay in their homes, according to data released at a hearing Monday on the city's Tenant Right to Counsel program.

“The story these numbers tell is clear: Providing tenants with a guaranteed attorney stops unfair displacement and gives San Francisco residents a fighting chance when facing eviction,” said Supervisor Dean Preston, who authored the 2018 ballot measure that established the universal right for all San Francisco tenants facing eviction to receive free legal counsel.

The information made public Monday, compiled by the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, is the first snapshot of how the right to counsel has performed to date, which includes:

- **Fewer eviction cases being filed**--a 10% decrease from 2018 to 2019--and for cases that are filed, fewer result in tenants' losing their housing.
- **Full scope representation -- one of the groundbreaking aspects of Prop. F -- results in far more tenants being able to stay in their homes.** Of the two-thirds receiving full scope representation, 67% were able to stay in their homes.
- **The program overwhelmingly benefits lower income tenants:** 85% of those represented under Prop. F are extremely low or low income, 9% are moderate income, and just 6% are above moderate.
- **Guaranteeing a right to counsel is one of the most powerful tools to stop the displacement of African-Americans:** four out of five African American tenants who receive an eviction notice and get help through this program end up staying in their homes, an 80% success rate.

At the hearing Monday, non-profit providers spoke to the success of the program. “The Eviction Defense Collaborative is proud to work with the City in leading the implementation of San Francisco Tenant Right to Counsel and heartened by the collaboration among all of the legal and tenant services providers as well as the community support for Tenant Right to Counsel,” said Martina Cucullu Lim, Executive Director of the



Eviction Defense Collaborative. “Despite the challenging mandate, we have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, and the successes of the first six months of implementation are founded in the collaboration and hard work of legal services providers. Nonetheless, there continues to be an unmet need that can only be remedied by increasing capacity so that San Francisco tenants facing eviction can receive the representation they need to stay housed.”

Proposition F, the 2018 ballot measure that established the program, required the city to fully implement tenant right to counsel by July 2019. “Given the success to date, and the voter mandate of Prop. F, we must fully fund this program,” Preston said. “It is not only cost-efficient, but providing a universal right to counsel for all tenants facing eviction is the right thing to do, and exactly what the voters required of the city in overwhelmingly passing Prop. F.”

While estimates vary, 17 to 22 additional attorneys would be needed for full implementation. At a cost of \$220,000 each (inclusive of paralegal, litigation expenses, and overhead), and assuming a continued success rate of 67% of all tenants who receive full scope representation, the cost of keeping San Franciscans in their homes through this program amounts to approximately \$6,470 per household.

San Francisco’s program, the first in the nation to universally require full legal representation, has been pivotal in the national movement to provide a tenant right to counsel. Since passing Proposition F in 2018, San Francisco has inspired other cities to follow suit, including Newark, New Jersey; Cleveland, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Santa Monica, California. In addition, Massachusetts and Connecticut are considering implementing statewide programs, and the City of Los Angeles is similarly exploring right to counsel legislation, among other cities.

“Establishing a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction is a movement sweeping the nation,” says John Pollock, Coordinator of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, pointing to the five cities that have already established the right and the half dozen cities/states that have legislation pending. “San Francisco was right at the forefront of this movement, and this new data proves what advocates here and across the country have always known about how it’s a game changer.”

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