

From: [Michael Schramm](#)
To: [HSGTestimony](#)
Cc: [Rep. Lemar, Roland](#)
Subject: In support of H.B. 6531 and H.B. 6528
Date: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 8:03:36 AM

Dear Sen. Lopes, Rep. McGee, and members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Michael Schramm, and I am a registered voter from the City of New Haven testifying in support of H.B. 6531, *An Act Concerning the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings*, and H.B. 6528, *An Act Concerning the Sealing of Eviction Records*. Both of these pieces of legislation are crucial to protecting Connecticut residents during this COVID pandemic winter.

I am passionate about these two bills because I have seen the damage that eviction without representation can do to a family. Eviction has tragically touched my family. I have seen firsthand how disorienting and overwhelming the eviction process can be. The eviction process generally, and housing court specifically, are incredibly confusing for a lay person, especially for people who are working full-time jobs and do not have a law degree with a specialization in civil court. Eviction destroys families, destroys homes, and destroys lives. On top of this incredible amount of destruction, the public nature of eviction records means that these family members face an even more difficult time finding new housing once they have been evicted. These two processes compound to produce a devastating cycle. In my personal experience, the eviction process plays out over years, a proverbial Sword of Damocles hanging perilously overhead.

On a broader scale, these two bills are crucial for keeping people in their homes. Studies show that nearly 80% of landlords have legal representation in eviction cases, while only 7% of tenants have legal representation in eviction cases. Evictions disproportionately affect black and brown families, most specifically single mothers who are women of color. Studies show black and brown tenants face eviction at nearly twice the rate of white tenants. On a macro level, this is a racial and gender justice issue that hits home more than many other issues.

Especially during this COVID pandemic winter, we must protect Connecticut residents by providing adequate legal rights. Citizens accused of a crime are guaranteed the right to legal representation as a matter of due course. This right is celebrated across the political spectrum and is a foundational piece of American legal thought and civil rights. Those same rights should be extended to people facing eviction. No tenant should have to navigate this byzantine process alone. In the unfortunate case that someone is evicted from their home, they should not have to carry this "Scarlet E" as they try to find a new place to call home.

Eviction is a crisis that often passes in silence, unnoticed by those not facing the eviction themselves. It is time to provide basic protections to our most vulnerable citizens. I strongly support H.B. 6531 and H.B. 6528 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the housing committee.

Thank you,
Michael Schramm
New Haven