

Wilmington, Delaware
July 3, 2025

#0079

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Darby**

WHEREAS, the 2022-2025 Wilmington City Council Strategic Plan Goal of a “Stabilized Wilmington” reflects a commitment to bolstering vibrant, stable communities and addressing the factors that threaten long-term housing security, including the risk of eviction; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 59% of Wilmington’s occupied housing units are renter-occupied. Statewide, the number of cost-burden renters, tenants spending more than 30% of their income on rent, has increased by 26%. The rising proportions of household income dedicated to rent place tenants at greater risk of eviction and eventual dislocation; and

WHEREAS, Delaware law allows landlords to begin eviction proceedings after giving tenants five days’ notice for nonpayment of rent. Households face barriers to understanding their rights or the legal process sufficiently to advocate for themselves and their families. Without early support or intervention, they are often left to navigate court alone while under great financial and emotional stress; and

WHEREAS, between November 2023 and March 2025, Wilmington saw 6,750 eviction filings, with legal aid organizations representing tenants in 980 cases across Wilmington zip codes 19801, 19802, 19805, and 19806. During this time, settlement assistance funds helped resolve 266 cases for tenants at risk of eviction; and

WHEREAS, Wilmington is projected to see 4,765 eviction filings annually. Based on current trends, approximately 30% of impacted tenants will qualify for legal representation, while up to 50% could benefit from settlement assistance; and

WHEREAS, Delaware's Right to Representation in evictions law provides access to free legal counsel for income-eligible tenants facing eviction through services provided by the state's non-profit civil legal assistance organizations: Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI), Delaware Volunteer Legal Services (DVLS), and Legal Services Corporation of Delaware (LSCD). The initiative includes a Settlement Assistance Fund and a Housing Stability Program, which provide tenants with an average of \$1,100 towards settling an eviction case. Financial support for this initiative will end within the year 2025; and

WHEREAS, rising costs of living and the challenges of housing affordability are an ongoing concern for combatting housing insecurity in the City of Wilmington. Individuals facing housing instability due to evictions face a range of negative physical and psychosocial consequences, including mental health strain, financial distress, increased vulnerability to illnesses, disruptions in familial and community relationships, and even decreased productivity and reliability in the workplace. Research has identified associations between housing instability and reduced academic performance, emotional regulation, and overall cognitive development in children; and

WHEREAS, evictions disproportionately affect minorities, female-led households, individuals with disabilities, households with children, domestic abuse victims, and other vulnerable communities. Investing in tenant rights protections and legal representation in the eviction process is a critical tool for preventing homelessness, displacement, and community dysfunction; and

WHEREAS, 78% of the Right to Representation in evictions' Settlement Assistance Fund was used to help tenants remain in their homes, and an additional 15% was used to negotiate more time to move for tenants who were required to vacate their homes. Based on

the current trends in eviction filings in Wilmington, the Right to Representation initiative projects that they would require \$786,000 to maintain their current levels of efficiency; and

WHEREAS, the effects of eviction filings have lasting effects on individuals, households, communities, and the fabric of our City. Research has repeatedly shown impacts on the financial, psychological, social, and physical well-being of individuals facing eviction. An amendment to the fiscal year 2026 budget to facilitate the continuation of Right to Representation in evictions programming would reinforce housing stability and community integrity for numerous residents in need.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that this Legislative body urges the Administration to initiate an amendment to the fiscal year 2026 budget to make funding available to the Right to Representation in evictions program that supports legal representation, settlement assistance, early intervention and tenant outreach for residents in the City of Wilmington.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that eviction prevention is essential to supporting the economic mobility of Wilmington residents and fostering thriving communities for present and future generations.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: The 2022-2025 Wilmington City Council Strategic Plan Goal of a “Stabilized Wilmington” reflects a commitment to bolstering vibrant, stable communities and addressing the factors that threaten long-term housing security, including the risk of eviction. This Resolution urges the Administration to initiate an amendment to the fiscal year 2026 budget to make funding available to the Right to Representation in evictions program that supports legal

representation, settlement assistance, early intervention, and tenant outreach for residents in the City of Wilmington.

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