

**JOINT TESTIMONY OF RIGHT TO COUNSEL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE,
PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING**

March 17, 2026

**BRONX DEFENDERS
BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC
CAMBA LEGAL SERVICES
HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS
LEGAL SERVICES NYC
MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION FOR INTER-CULTURAL AFFAIRS
NEIGHBORHOOD DEFENDER SERVICE
NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you to the City Council’s General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify about the crucial need to improve the City’s contracting process and the need for increased funding and contract reform to meet the mandate of the Right to Counsel (RTC) program to best serve New York City residents.

Over the last 9 years, the critical Right to Counsel program has been well established in housing proceedings in New York City. Studies consistently show that tenants with legal representation in eviction proceedings remain in their homes and that RTC programs reduce the number of eviction filings. In New York City, 84% of tenants with an attorney remain in their homes, while eviction filings and default judgments have dropped by 30% since the implementation of the RTC program.¹ Furthermore, legal representation results in fewer judgments of possession and lower

¹ See, “In the most expensive city in the country, evictions remain lower than before COVID-19,” by John Pablo Garnhem, The Eviction Lab (January 14, 2025), <https://evictionlab.org/in-the-most-expensive-city-in-the-country-evictions-remain-lower-than-before-covid-19/>, last visited March 18, 2026.

money judgments. The impact of RTC goes beyond keeping families housed. Evictions have far-reaching consequences, not only affecting housing stability but also impacting employment, physical health, and mental well-being. Even when displacement cannot be avoided, representation ensures that tenants obtain valuable time to navigate related challenges, such as finding alternative housing or stabilizing their finances.²

The benefits of RTC extend beyond the tenants themselves—it also saves the City money. By reducing the number of people who enter the shelter system, the program alleviates one of the most expensive items of the City’s budget.³ **In Fiscal Year 2024, DHS spent approximately \$2.22 billion on adult and family shelter operations, and the average length of stay for single adults in shelter remained longer than a year—378 days in Fiscal Year 2025.** The funding required to fully implement RTC -- \$350 million – is a fraction of that amount, making it a cost-effective tool to address the housing crisis, preserve affordable housing, and stabilize vulnerable communities.

This testimony highlights the critical issues currently facing Right to Counsel (RTC) providers in New York City, beginning with the ongoing delays in payment that threaten our ability to sustain our operations. Despite timely registration of contracts with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), some providers have been unable to invoice for services since July, placing immense financial strain on our organizations, particularly smaller ones. This delay, coupled with a proposed 10% penalty on payments and a recent policy that reimburses only 90% of invoices, undermines the fiscal viability of our programs and puts at risk the delivery of high-quality legal services.

Additionally, the FY25-27 RTC contracts fall far short of addressing the growing need for legal representation in eviction cases. The overall amount of funding fails to meet the demand for legal representation – in fact funding covers only 36% of the eviction filings each year. Moreover, the current contract’s proposed case rates are insufficient to cover the costs of providing competent, holistic representation. There are widely disparate case rates across providers which should be right sized to ensure that each organization is properly compensated for the true cost of the work.

Specifically, we urge the City to take immediate action to reform its current contracting process which is marked by significant disorganization and includes delays in payment that jeopardize provider’s ability to provide crucial legal services to clients. We also urge the City to reform the FY 25-27 RTC contracts which are greatly unequal across provider organizations and simply do not provide for funding sufficient to meet the demand for representation in eviction cases throughout the City.

² See, The Effect of Legal Representation on Tenant Outcomes in Housing Court: Evidence from New York City’s Universal Access Program, by Mike Cassidy, Janet Currie. Journal of Public Economics Volume 222, June 2023.

³ See, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2025/03/Department-of-Homeless-Services.pdf> and <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2026/dhs.pdf>.

I. The City Should Reform its Current Contracting Process.

A. The City's Current Contracting Process Is Marked by Significant Disorganization.

The City's current contracting process is marked by significant disorganization, including delay in registering contracts, failure to timely allocate and disburse funds, and inadequate clarity regarding reimbursement procedures. Together these issues pose significant challenges to nonprofit organizations contracted to provide services on behalf of New York City.

Nonprofit organizations face significant disadvantages in comparison to City agencies when it comes to receiving funding to provide services. While City agencies begin the fiscal year with their funding already allocated and confirmed, nonprofits are left waiting for funding confirmation, often for months into the fiscal year. This delay in securing funding allocations and awards creates operational challenges and financial uncertainty for nonprofits, undermining their ability to deliver essential services to New Yorkers who rely on them. Additionally, the City's registration of the respective contracts can also take months, if not years, which further delays the availability of funds and wreaks havoc on nonprofits' budgets and financial statements.

Furthermore, nonprofits are subjected to a complex, bureaucratic reimbursement process that is characterized by frequent changes in rules, requirements, and deadlines. This lack of clarity and consistency creates further inefficiencies and delays, forcing organizations to spend valuable time and funding navigating a convoluted system rather than focusing on their core mission of serving clients.

The City must ensure that nonprofits receive their funding allocations in a timely manner at the beginning of each fiscal year. Delayed confirmation of funding forces organizations to operate without financial certainty, placing their operations, staff, and services at risk. By aligning the timing of nonprofit funding with City agencies and ensuring timely contract registration, the City can level the playing field and allow nonprofits to plan and execute their programs without interruption.

In addition to timely funding confirmation, nonprofits require a clear and consistent set of reimbursement guidelines to minimize confusion and ensure that payments are processed quickly and efficiently. The City should provide detailed and stable guidance on reimbursement procedures, clearly outlining the expectations and documentation requirements upfront. Furthermore, the City must avoid sudden changes to reimbursement rules mid-year, which can create serious operational disruptions and financial challenges for nonprofits.

The City must also streamline the contracting process itself, reducing unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the approval and payment process. Nonprofits should be able to enter into contracts and submit invoices without facing excessive delays due to administrative red tape. Increasing contract processing staff, and establishing clear and realistic timelines for approvals, would help ensure that contracts and payments move forward without unnecessary delay. By making the contracting process more efficient and user-friendly, the City will allow nonprofits to focus on serving clients, rather than spending valuable resources navigating an unnecessarily complicated and inefficient system.

Finally, to address cash flow challenges, the City should implement pre-approved advances or interim payments based on established milestones. This approach would help nonprofits cover operating expenses and ensure that they can continue to serve their communities while waiting for full reimbursement. Advances should be issued promptly and proportionally, reflecting the work being done, so that nonprofits have the necessary financial flexibility to maintain their operations.

By implementing these reforms, the City can reduce the operational burdens placed on nonprofit organizations, enabling them to better serve New Yorkers in need. Streamlining the contracting and funding processes will lead to more effective service delivery, reduced administrative costs, and a more sustainable nonprofit sector that is better equipped to fulfill its vital role in the community.

Recommendation

The City should align the timing of nonprofit funding with that of City agencies so nonprofits contracted to deliver services on behalf of the City can do so without interruption or delay. The City should also provide clear, upfront direction on reimbursement expectations and processes, reducing the bureaucratic hurdles nonprofits must cross in order to receive funding. The City should also implement pre-approved advances and interim payments to alleviate ongoing cash-flow problems plaguing nonprofit providers.

B. The City Should Pay Nonprofits Timely to Avoid Jeopardizing Providers' Ability to Deliver Crucial Legal Services to Clients.

The most urgent issue facing Right to Counsel (RTC) providers is the ongoing delay in receiving payment on contracts with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), which includes critical funding for RTC and the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program (AHTP), and is greatly impeding providers' ability to provide crucial legal services to clients as well as sustain basic operations as nonprofit organizations.

While our contracts were registered on time, most of the nonprofit legal service providers that offer essential housing legal work for low-income and vulnerable tenants have not yet been able to invoice for all of their costs, due to the City's delays in approving our FY26 budgets. As a result, many RTC providers have now gone nine months without being able to fully invoice, except for limited advances that fail to cover providers' full costs. These outstanding amounts are on top of the significant amounts owed to providers for FY25 contracts.

Payment delays are threatening the viability of our organizations, especially for smaller nonprofits, and jeopardize our provision of legal services to those facing eviction or housing instability. The delays represent millions of dollars to smaller providers, and tens of millions to larger providers, causing financial strain to small and large providers alike. These delays not only jeopardize our capacity to meet payroll but also undermine our ability to fulfill our mission of providing high-quality, timely legal representation to those most in need, many of whom are facing imminent eviction.

Such delays often force nonprofit providers to subsidize their services with private dollars while waiting for payment from the City. Organizations frequently must rely on reserves or lines of credit

simply to continue operating, incurring interest costs and taking on financial risk in order to sustain services that the City has contracted them to provide. These borrowing costs represent resources that could otherwise be used to represent additional tenants and families in need.

While the advance on baseline City contracts this year was an appreciable improvement, we are now well beyond the period these advances cover, and we have no way to receive additional payment on these contracts beyond these advances. Even though HRA has been working to resolve this issue, providers are nearly nine months into the current fiscal year and many are *still* waiting for budget approvals in order to invoice for their services, and all have experienced payment delays for services they have been able to invoice. Nonprofit RTC providers need to invoice monthly to ensure they have enough cash to make payroll, and to continue providing much needed services, especially now that RTC contracts, with the expansion of the program, account for large percentages of providers' overall organizational budgets. Some organizations are already relying on or about to exhaust lines of credit. If providers don't have money to pay their attorneys and paralegals because of HRA contractual delays, their work will come to a screeching halt, completely frustrating the purpose of the RTC program. Nonprofits cannot continue to operate this way. It is simply unsustainable.

This existential threat is further compounded by HRA's position that, in implementing a provision that providers must meet performance milestones to earn 10% of the contract amount, HRA will pay the nonprofit providers only 90% of their invoices, whether they are meeting performance milestones or not. This plan, only shared with providers in mid-October 2024 after contracts were bid and issued (and not referenced in any contractual document) is disastrous for nonprofit RTC providers. Providers do not have reserves to await reimbursement for money they have spent – reimbursements that may not come if milestones cannot be met. This is an extremely damaging way to implement a new performance-based payment provision. This scheme unnecessarily undermines the effort to expand and improve this program for New Yorkers in need.

Recommendation

As the City continues to disentangle the bureaucratic morass that has utterly upended the orderly registration of contracts and payment of invoices, to ensure that RTC providers have sufficient cash to operate, the City must (1) allocate additional advances for 75% of the contract amounts immediately; and (2) commit to additional monthly advances until it is current in the payment of invoices submitted by RTC providers.

Further, the City must pay the full 100% on invoices as they are submitted.

II. The Providers Have Significant Concerns about the FY25-27 RTC Contract

A. The Funding Falls Far Short of Meeting the Need for Representation.

Despite the universally understood success of the Right to Counsel program, the vast majority of tenants face eviction in our City without any hope of having a lawyer represent them.

According to the New York State Unified Court System’s Statewide Eviction information, residential eviction filings in 2025 in New York City totaled 119,845.⁴ The City is funding only 33,000 full representation cases each year⁵ (and the reality of these poorly funded contracts is that the City-funded providers could afford to represent 22,700 households in eviction cases last year – a record high⁶). In contrast, the Independent Budget Office found that 50,000 tenants are eligible for full representation under RTC each year.⁷ **This means that fewer than half of the eligible tenants were provided with full representation.** This left over 27,300 cases last year where eligible tenants had no hope of getting a lawyer under the Right to Counsel program.

This harmful deficiency is borne out by the data on representation levels in housing court. Of the residential eviction cases filed on March 9, 2025, which have now been pending for more than a year, only 38% of those cases ever ended up receiving representation.⁸ Of the cases filed on January 11, 2026, and having at least 2 appearances, only 12% of those tenants have a lawyer representing them currently.

The City is severely under-funding a program that is objectively successful in both moral and economic terms. The RTC program boasts an extremely high success rate in preventing evictions and other collateral consequences. Every eviction prevented by the program creates huge savings to the City by avoiding shelter costs, brings the City closer into compliance with its own RTC law, and protects the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Recommendation

The City should increase funding for Right to Counsel to a level sufficient for legal services providers to provide high-quality, holistic services to **all** eligible cases. There has to be sufficient funding to meet the demand for representation in the new cases being filed and the backlog of eviction defense cases pending without representation.

B. The Contracts Do Not Cover the Full Cost of Providing Anti-Eviction Services.

Eviction defense proceedings are complex and require significant time to resolve. New York City has some of the most robust and complicated housing laws in the country. Important laws, such as the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 and the Good Cause Eviction Law passed in 2024, have increased critical tenant protections while also adding to the complexities of tenant

⁴ New York State Unified Court System Statewide Eviction Information available at: <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieZGE3NzljYmItYTBMZC00OGI2LTliYTgtYzY5ZjI0N2U0MWYxIiwidCI6IjM0NTZmZTk5LWNiZDEtNDA2ZC1iNWVzLTUzNjRiZWwYTgzMyJ9>. Last visited March 16, 2026.

⁵ NYC Comptroller’s Report, Evictions Up, Representation Down: How New York City is Undermining the Right to Counsel, May 2, 2025, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/evictions-up-representation-down/>, last accessed March 18, 2026.

⁶ NYC Office of Civil Justice, FY 25 Annual Report, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2025.pdf

⁷ The Expansion of New York City’s Right to Counsel Program, NYC Independent Budget Office Report, September 2025 at 2, <https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/assets/ibo/downloads/pdf/community-and-social-services/2025/2025-septemberthe-expansion-of-nyc-right-to-counsel-program.pdf>, last accessed March 18, 2026.

⁸ NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor, <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/nycrcrisismonitor>, last accessed March 16, 2026.

defense. As a result, providers must increase staff training to stay current with the law and attorneys must dedicate more time per case. Notably, these changes have all occurred in the last few years. Since 2018, providers have seen a 24% increase in how many hours it takes to resolve a case, while increased administrative and training burdens mean that staff have fewer hours available to do casework.

The City should appropriate additional funds to the Right to Counsel Program so that each provider can receive the funding it needs to operate an effective program. Providers must be resourced to staff their programs appropriately, comply with reporting and programmatic requirements, train and supervise staff, retain experienced advocates, and deliver the holistic representation that tenants need. That includes not only attorneys, but also paralegals, social workers, administrative staff, and infrastructure supports such as finance, HR, and IT. While legal representation may stop an eviction in the immediate term, stabilizing a household often requires benefits advocacy, social work support, and coordinated follow-up. Underfunding these functions undermines the effectiveness of the program as a whole and leaves families vulnerable to repeated housing instability.

Before the RFX process, providers collected data showing that the average cost of holistically defending an eviction case with fair staff compensation and adequate program support was approximately \$7,500 per case. Since then, costs have only risen due to longer case timelines, new legal protections, inflation, and the operational burdens associated with delayed contract payments and borrowing costs. But even that figure should be understood as a benchmark, not the sole measure of program need. The City should recognize that organizations vary in size, structure, staffing models, and institutional capacity, and funding must reflect those differences if the program is to succeed.

During the negotiation process for the current contract, providers were pressed to lower their proposed budgets toward an artificially constrained average. Some were encouraged to move as close as possible to \$3,500 per reportable case; at least one provider was told the average case rate was \$4,100 and was asked to reduce its proposal accordingly. OCJ strongly implied that bids would be rejected if providers did not lower their rates. This process was incompatible with the City's stated goal of allowing providers to identify their own costs and undermined the possibility of building a sustainable, effective program.

The results were predictable. Some providers accepted funding levels far below the actual cost of delivering services because they were committed to continuing this essential work. As a result, many RTC providers report that they are now operating programs that are underfunded relative to their staffing, supervision, infrastructure, and service obligations. This underfunding strains program quality, contributes to unsustainable workloads, hampers recruitment and retention, and limits providers' ability to deliver the holistic representation that tenants require. It also disproportionately harms smaller and community-based providers, which are often more dependent on RTC funding and less able to absorb structural shortfalls.

As Housing Courts continue scheduling cases at near pre-pandemic levels and as provider costs continue to rise, the City cannot maintain an effective Right to Counsel program by relying on funding assumptions that do not reflect the actual cost of the work. Every provider must receive

the resources necessary to run an effective program, and contract funding must be aligned with the real operational needs of each organization.

Recommendation

The City must ensure that additional funds are appropriated so that every RTC provider is funded at the level necessary to run an effective program. Funding should not be driven by an artificially flattened case-rate metric, but by the actual cost of delivering high-quality, holistic anti-eviction representation within each organization.

C. Additional RTC Contract Issues

(1) The 10% Reduction in Compensation Should Be Eliminated or at Least Suspended.

In FY25, the Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) implemented a new contractual penalty for nonprofit legal services providers that imposes a **10% funding reduction** for failing to meet metrics on a newly created performance scorecard. This measure exacerbates the challenges already faced by providers and undermines the fundamental goals of the Right to Counsel (RTC) program.

Compounding the impact of the 10% penalty, the metrics used by OCJ to evaluate providers were unclear prior to the first evaluation in January 2025. Even after that evaluation, the written guidance issued by OCJ has remained vague, and significant confusion persists about how the scorecard metrics are calculated and how providers will be evaluated in future review periods. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for providers to plan staffing, manage caseloads, and ensure compliance with contractual expectations.

Providers are also frequently at the mercy of systemic delays that are outside their control, including Housing Court backlogs, congested court calendars, inefficient court administration, delays in obtaining public benefits assistance, unresponsive opposing counsel, and evolving legal standards that affect case timelines and outcomes. Penalizing providers for failing to meet rigid quantitative benchmarks disregards these external factors and unfairly shifts risk onto nonprofit organizations.

The penalty also creates **perverse incentives** that may undermine the quality of legal representation. In an effort to meet contractual benchmarks, organizations may feel pressure to prioritize quantitative outputs over substantive outcomes, potentially taking on more cases than their staff can reasonably handle or resolving cases prematurely. These dynamics risk compromising the quality of representation that the RTC program was designed to guarantee.

Notably, **this type of performance-penalty contract structure is not used for other indigent defense systems in New York City**, such as criminal or family court representation. Criminal defense providers funded through the City and State, including institutional defender offices and assigned counsel programs, generally receive stable funding structures designed to ensure representation, rather than contracts that impose financial penalties tied to case-processing metrics. Similarly, attorneys providing representation in Family Court matters such as parent defense

matters or custody cases are not subject to comparable contractual scorecards that reduce organizational funding based on performance metrics tied to case throughput.

The absence of similar penalty structures in other indigent defense contexts reflects a core principle: **legal representation for marginalized New Yorkers requires stable funding and professional independence, not financial penalties tied to outcomes influenced by court systems and external actors.** Applying a punitive metric-based model to housing defense, while other right-to-counsel systems in New York City rely on more stable funding frameworks—creates an inequitable and destabilizing structure for RTC providers.

Finally, the penalty provision has broader downstream implications for the City itself. Weakening RTC providers through financial penalties increases the likelihood of evictions, which in turn impose significant costs on municipal systems, including emergency shelter, public assistance, and healthcare services. From a cost-benefit perspective, adequately funding and supporting RTC providers is far more fiscally responsible than penalizing them within an already underfunded system.

Recommendation

The City should eliminate or suspend the 10% performance penalty. At a minimum, OCJ should assess its written guidelines detailing how scorecard metrics are calculated and evaluated. The City should also incorporate flexibility into the evaluation process when providers are unable to meet quantitative metrics due to systemic factors outside of their control.

(2) Rollovers and Brief Services Should Be Counted and Funded.

The current contracts, in sharp contrast to the first nine years of the RTC program, no longer allow cases continuing beyond one year to be “rolled over” and reported in subsequent fiscal years. This change ignores that eviction cases are complicated and often last beyond a year. Disallowing RTC providers from reporting rollover cases as part of their deliverables creates a perverse incentive for providers to prioritize “easy” cases and de-prioritize representing tenants with complex and time-intensive cases. Any incentivization of one case or another caused by contract terms is fundamentally repugnant to the letter and spirit of the Right to Counsel law and to our missions as legal service providers. Such antithetical incentives undermine this essential program.

In a world where not every eligible tenant will obtain legal representation, RTC providers' ability to be compensated for brief legal assistance is an invaluable part of preventing homelessness. For community-based legal service providers, providing brief legal assistance to their neighborhoods is a fundamental part of their mission. In contrast, the new contract's elimination of partial payment for these cases and a shift to all those cases being handled by one provider via a telephone hotline means that every neighborhood referral forces the community provider to choose between providing services for “free” with limited resources and operating contrary to its mission by turning away the vulnerable tenants.

We urge the City to fund brief legal assistance, as it has under previous contracts. This change would allow providers to triage cases at intake and to provide legal advice to the community in accordance with our missions.

Recommendation

The City must fund providers for all active and litigated cases, even those that take a year or more to resolve. The City must also sufficiently fund brief services and advice work to reflect the realities of RTC practice on the ground, particularly for community-based RTC providers.

(3) OCJ Should Streamline and Simplify the Onerous Reporting Requirements of the Right to Counsel Contracts

OCJ's increasingly strict reporting requirements often obstruct the goal of obtaining data that accurately reflects RTC providers' work. By prioritizing strict adherence to reporting protocols over case management realities, OCJ does not obtain a complete picture of RTC providers' work, consumes precious resources with data collection and management, and fails to credit providers for work done where marginally relevant data cannot be obtained. For example, if a provider cannot obtain a tenant's unit number, the case cannot be reported despite the provider dedicating dozens of hours to the case. The resulting obligation to devote increasing resources to reporting data undermines the program's overall effectiveness.

Inaccurate or delayed data not only obscures the true scope of RTC providers' work but also undermines the program's accountability and strategic planning. When RTC providers must divert time and resources toward meeting burdensome reporting requirements, they have less capacity to focus on their clients' urgent legal needs.

Recommendation

OCJ must adopt less burdensome and more flexible reporting practices that align with the operational realities of nonprofit legal services providers, who expend excessive resources attempting to comply with OCJ's changeable yet rigid reporting requirements.

VI. CONCLUSION

As we move through the many stages of NYC's housing crisis, we as providers remain on the frontline of efforts to ensure that the needs of New York's marginalized communities are met. We will continue to make the case for justice and equity, and we urge the City to adopt the recommendations provided throughout this testimony. As our clients undergo this unparalleled crisis, we stand right there beside them. On behalf of Bronx Defenders, Build Up Justice NYC, CAMBA Legal Services, Inc., Housing Conservation Coordinators, Legal Services NYC, Mobilization for Justice, Neighborhood Association for Inter-Cultural Affairs, Inc., Neighborhood Defender Service, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and The Legal Aid Society, we thank you for your continued support, and for allowing us to testify today.

If you want to learn more about RTC and the issues discussed in the testimony, we invite you to read the RTC Concept Paper authored by the Legal Services Providers which can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Vtdi7vfdw67YbnlUtYq9OkXP9WE55sAx24ZTjbVv38/edit?usp=sharing> and is attached to the version of this testimony submitted on-line.

LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS

BRONX DEFENDERS

The Bronx Defenders (“BxD”) is a public defender nonprofit that is radically transforming how people in the Bronx are represented in the legal system, and, in doing so, is transforming the system itself. Our office’s staff of over 450 includes interdisciplinary teams comprised of civil, criminal, immigration, and family defense attorneys, as well as social workers, benefits specialists, legal advocates, parent advocates, investigators, team administrators, and policy, organizing, and community engagement specialists who collaborate to provide holistic advocacy to address the causes and consequences of legal system involvement and push for systemic reform at the local, state, and national level.

Through this integrated, comprehensive, referral-based structure, we have pioneered a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized model of direct services representation we call “holistic defense” that achieves transformative outcomes for the people we represent. Each year, we defend over 20,000 low-income Bronx residents across civil, criminal, immigration, and family legal systems, and reach thousands more through our community intake, youth mentoring, and outreach programs. We take what we learn from the people we represent and communities that we work with and launch innovative programs designed to bring about real and lasting change.

Our Civil Action Practice

The Civil Action Practice provides comprehensive civil legal services to clients and their families by integrating civil representation. Our goal is to actualize the civil right to counsel – including for tenants – and minimize the severe and often unforeseen fallout from housing, criminal, family, and immigration court proceedings and facilitate the seamless reintegration of our clients into the community. Our Civil Action Practice attorneys, social workers and benefits & legal advocates represent clients in every forum in New York City – administrative, state, and federal – to address these problems and assist our clients in overcoming civil legal barriers to housing, eviction, employment, and public benefits, as well as addressing instances of police misconduct, criminal record errors, and civil forfeiture.

BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, doing business as Build Up Justice NYC (BUJNYC), believes all New Yorkers should have equal access to legal services to seek justice, make their voices heard, and overcome systemic racism and oppression. We represent low- and moderate-income individuals and families throughout New York City. Our clients live in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods where many residents and small business owners have been displaced or are facing displacement and harassment. For more than half a century, BUJNYC has provided high-quality, low-barrier neighborhood-based legal services to individuals, families, nonprofit community-based organizations, community development corporations, coalitions, and small business owners, interested in developing and sustaining vibrant, healthy communities. Our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program uses legal and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent evictions, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and ensure that working families, individuals, older adults, and others live in stable environments and within their financial means. BUJNYC’s PAH Brooklyn and Queens Programs have almost 50 staff attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and supervising attorneys, in addition to other supporting staff.

CAMBA LEGAL SERVICES

CAMBA Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) is a community-based law practice in Brooklyn and Staten Island that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income New York City residents. Our mission as a dedicated and diverse staff of lawyers and paralegals is to provide our clients with the highest quality of legal representation while standing committed with our communities in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice. CAMBA Legal Services' Housing Unit provides anti-eviction legal services to tenants, including legal advice and representation in non-payment proceedings, holdovers, HP actions for repairs, HCR overcharge complaints, administrative hearings (NYCHA and HPD), Article 78s and other related proceedings. The CLS Housing Unit has a staff of more than 56 attorneys and paralegals. CLS prides itself on being guided by the following principles: compassionate case handling, decentering the attorney to empower the client, tenacious advocacy, collaborative learning, and a commitment to legal excellence.

HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS

Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC) is a community based legal services organization that was founded over 50 years ago to "advance social and economic justice and fight for the rights of poor, low-income and working individuals and families." HCC provides comprehensive services on housing-related matters, including preventing displacement, accessing public benefits, and preserving the limited stock of affordable housing, immigration matters, consumer protection and elder law to help stabilize the lowest income households.

HCC has served income eligible residents in Manhattan through the Right to Counsel Program since 2017.

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Legal Services NYC's (LSNYC) is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with a mission to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For over 50 years, LSNYC has helped New Yorkers obtain the basic necessities of life, including housing, economic security, family and immigration stability, education, health care, and challenge the systemic injustices that trap people in poverty. At LSNYC, we pride ourselves on our deep community roots, our holistic, trauma-informed approach to advocacy, and our ability to work creatively, strategically, and collaboratively with our clients.

MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE

Mobilization for Justice's (MFJ) mission is to achieve justice for all. MFJ prioritizes the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities as they struggle to overcome the effects of social injustice and systemic racism. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education and build partnerships, engage in policy advocacy, and bring impact litigation. MFJ has a staff of more than 150 attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and support staff. It is a diverse, unionized, and collegial workplace where staff share the organization's mission to achieve social justice.

MFJ's housing practice is honored to engage in Right to Counsel work in the Bronx and Manhattan, where we deploy a wide array of litigation and advocacy strategies to prevent eviction and to protect tenants' rights.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEFENDER SERVICE OF HARLEM

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) is a community-based public defender office that provides high-quality legal services to residents of Northern Manhattan and a member of the LEAP coalition. Since 1990, NDS has been working to improve the quality and depth of criminal and civil defense representation for those unable to afford an attorney through holistic, cross-practice representation. With the early implementation of Right to Counsel in key Northern Manhattan zip codes, NDS joined the Right to Counsel Coalition and began serving the community through the Right to Counsel Program. As a holistic public defender office, NDS is particularly familiar with the collateral consequences of homelessness, including an increased chance of entering the criminal legal system.

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a community-based, settlement house and not-for-profit organization founded in 1979. NMIC is a leading multi-service agency with over 140 staff members serving New York City, with a focus on residents of upper Manhattan and the Bronx. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our communities on their paths to secure and prosperous futures. Integration is the cornerstone of NMIC's programs, and our staff can identify and address a broad array of immediate needs through comprehensive crisis intervention services. Clients may then move seamlessly to capacity building services through our holistic programs designed to transition individuals and families to safer, healthier, and more stable futures.

NMIC's Legal, Organizing, and Advocacy (LOA) unit meets community members' basic needs including legal representation, immigration assistance, housing advocacy and tenant organizing, eviction-defense representation, financial-planning and tax preparation services, services for survivors of domestic violence, and health and mental health related programming. NMIC serves about 14,000 clients each year across the LOA programs and its Education and Career Services unit.

NMIC's advocacy for the housing rights of its community began with the founding of the organization, nearly 45 years ago. NMIC's representation of tenants in New York City housing courts reaches back decades and it is an original RTC provider, since the program's inception.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, was founded in 1876 to provide free legal representation to marginalized New York City families and individuals. The Legal Aid Society's legal program operates three major practices – Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights – and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. Each year, LAS handles more than 250,000 cases and legal matters for clients, taking on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States.

Our Civil Practice works to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals to obtain and maintain the necessities of life - housing, health care, food

and self-sufficiency. We serve as a “one-stop” legal resource for clients with a broad variety of legal problems, ranging, among others, from government benefits and access to health care, to immigration and domestic violence. Our depth and breadth of experience is unmatched in the legal profession and gives the Society a unique capacity to go beyond any one individual case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals, and broader, more powerful systemic change at a societal level.

Our work has always taken an explicit racial and social equity lens, and the current housing crisis has further focused our efforts to advocate for the needs of New York’s marginalized communities.