

Campaign Spotlight Series

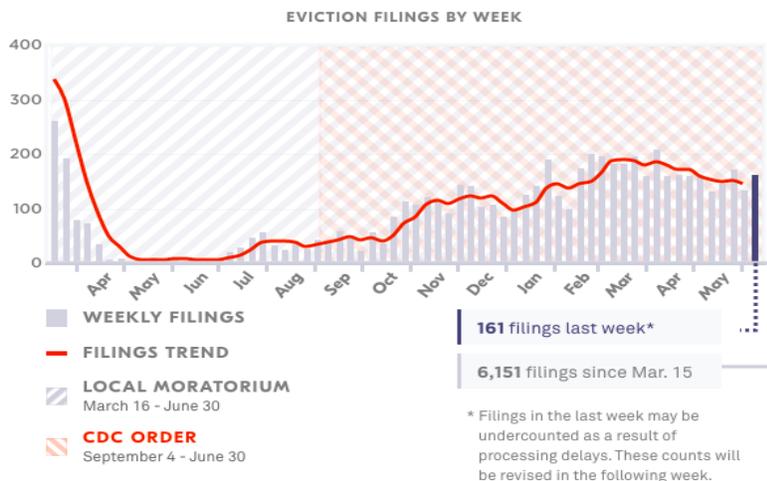


Addressing Connecticut's Eviction Crisis

June 2021

At New Haven Legal Assistance Association (NHLAA), we believe that housing is a human right and is critical to keeping families healthy and safe. As eviction filings rise, **LAA is fundraising to raise \$150,000** to hire additional staff members for our housing unit. We hope that you consider contributing to our campaign, as your financial support would make a lasting impact at this time.

Prior to the pandemic, approximately 20,000 evictions were filed in CT courts annually, but it is predicted that this number will rise to nearly 25,000 evictions or more.



Data from the Eviction Lab at Princeton University reveals that while eviction filings fell sharply in April 2020 as a result of the state-wide eviction moratorium, filings have been slowly increasing ever since. The federal CDC moratorium has been extended until at least 6/30/2021 and eviction filings are expected to increase dramatically when eviction protections are no longer in effect.

Connecticut has been experiencing a housing crisis for decades, where 31% of residents are rent-burdened. New Haven is particularly affected by the housing crisis, ranking among the top 100 cities with the highest eviction rates in the country.

There are significant racial disparities in eviction rates and serious consequences for those who are evicted. Black women face the highest rates of eviction than any other demographic, and nearly one in four Black renters live in an area in which the Black eviction rate is more than double the white eviction rate. Moreover, there are compounding costs of eviction; not only do tenants lose their home, but they lose ties to their community, regularly lose ownership of their possessions, face relocation costs and the repercussions of a court record, and are even at a greater risk of job loss as they take time away from work to navigate legal proceedings.

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“Eviction is not just a condition of poverty— it is a cause of it”

LAA staff is primed to continue representing clients in court and provide assistance with applying for rental assistance.

While landlords are represented in 90% of eviction actions, tenants only have a lawyer around 10% of the time. Many of the eviction cases are resolved through neutral housing mediators, but given the disparities in accessing representation, there is an inherent power imbalance during these mediations and housing court proceedings.

During most of the pandemic, although state and local municipalities initiated rental assistance programs, many tenants still face barriers to applying and ultimately receiving those funds.

The time to make a lasting impact is now.

NHLAA serves clients living at or below 125% of the federal poverty level in 22 cities and towns in the Greater New Haven and Lower Naugatuck Valley communities. Our client base are primarily people of color in the New Haven area impacted by the legacy of structural racialization, systemic racism, and implicit bias. They are children, low-wage workers, domestic violence survivors, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and immigrants.

We recently represented a man who faced eviction from his home. He was laid off from his job during the pandemic, and while he qualified for unemployment benefits he had been locked out of the system. We helped our client navigate the unemployment compensation system and he was ultimately approved for his benefits retroactively. And now, because he has a source of income, he will remain in his housing.

To address the surge of eviction filings and support more of our clients in similar circumstances, our goal is to hire additional staff for our housing unit, including attorneys, legal assistants, and community organizers.

Your generous support will make a difference in the lives of many people living in our community who need legal help to maintain their basic human needs like housing, safety, income, and education.

