



Rhode Island LEGAL SERVICES

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Housing Law Center Update

Eviction Rates at a Crisis Level

There is a dire need for counsel to help tenants in private eviction actions. According to the Providence Journal, Providence has nearly 3 times the eviction rate as neighboring Boston. Over 92% of tenants facing evictions do so without the help of counsel. We have focused our attention on these issues by expanding our eviction defense work through the Housing Stability Project. One of our strategic goals is to identify and address the growing eviction crisis which effects Rhode Island's most disenfranchised

****Breaking News**** Champlin Foundation Funds the Purchase of Additional Space

Through a generous grant from the Champlin Foundation, RILS has purchased an additional 6,000 square foot space in our current Hanley Building location. Expanding the physical space of the Housing Law Center enables us to devote more staff to working with Rhode Islanders facing the eviction crisis.

"There is a housing and eviction crisis in Rhode Island and responding to the legal needs of our community for safe, affordable



housing is a priority. The Champlin Foundation's investment will provide expanded office space for the Housing Law Center as we work to keep Rhode Islanders in homes that are safe and affordable."

~ Robert M. Barge, Executive Director

With the investment from the Champlin

populations, such as the low-income, elderly, and veteran communities.

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Foundation, we have acquired the space we need to expand the Housing Law Center. One of our priorities is to respond to the legal needs of our community for safe, affordable housing.

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Rhode Island Foundation Invests in the Expansion of the Housing Stability Project

RILS has received a \$100,000 grant from the **Rhode Island Foundation** toward supporting staffing in the Housing Law Center. This support will allow us to devote more resources to private landlord-tenant matters so that this group of vulnerable Rhode Islanders can get the assistance they desperately need (but have been unable to get).



Steven S. Flores
Director of Housing Law Center

RILS will use this new funding to assist tenants in private landlord-tenant disputes. In an effort to maximize the impact of the Rhode Island Foundation's investment, RILS will conduct community outreach throughout Rhode Island with the goal of educating tenants about their rights and obligations under the law. RILS staff will also provide training to volunteer law students and attorneys, so that more members of the Bar are ultimately empowered to provide representation in these matters.

Steven S. Flores says, *"Approximately 92% of Rhode Islanders being evicted do not have counsel and landlords almost always do. Thanks to the Rhode Island Foundation's investment, we can keep more families in the homes they already have, which is one of the most efficient ways to combat homelessness and the devastating cycle of poverty that so many Rhode Islanders face."*

Additional Funding Still Needed

RILS has the expertise and the space to combat the eviction crisis. But we need more attorneys. With an additional investment of about \$600,000,

Robert M. Barge, the Executive Director says:

"RILS, the Center for Justice, and the Volunteer Lawyer Program working collaboratively can address the legal need for representation of tenants in private eviction matters. Even a delay in eviction proceedings is a benefit to tenants helping to avoid homelessness. It has been said that eviction is not simply a symptom of poverty, but a cause."



Robert M. Barge
Executive Director

Based on filing numbers from the Rhode Island District Court, on average there are over 20 evictions filed in Rhode Island every day. Additional funding for our Housing Law Center will allow RILS to keep more families in their homes.

Volunteer Opportunities

RILS is looking for **volunteer lawyers and law students** to join our eviction defense work. This is a great opportunity for law students and lawyers with time to give!



Through this volunteer opportunity, RILS will provide:

- Training
- Flexible Hours
- Expert Supervision
- Professional Liability Insurance
- Eviction and Housing Law Experience
- A chance to give back to the community

To express your interest in volunteering, email your resume to ncarrara@rils.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter!



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