

# Tenants facing eviction will get lawyers paid for by city

BY ERIN DURKIN

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS Thursday, July 20, 2017, 6:21 PM



“No legal proceeding is fair if only one side has a lawyer,” said Councilman Mark Levine (D-Manhattan). (JEFFERSON SIEGEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Tenants facing eviction will get lawyers paid for by the city under a bill passed by the City Council Thursday.

The legislation for the first time establishes a “right to counsel” in housing court — where unlike in criminal court, people have not been entitled to lawyers.

Almost all landlords have an attorney.

“No legal proceeding is fair if only one side has a lawyer,” said Councilman Mark Levine (D-Manhattan). “The worst landlords have used housing court as a weapon, hauling tenants into court on flimsy eviction cases because they knew that in the vast majority of cases the tenant would not have a lawyer.”

Paying for lawyers is expected to cost the city \$93 million once it’s fully in place in five years. Mayor de Blasio agreed to the funding in this year’s budget, after previously saying it would be too costly.

The city will begin by offering lawyers to people living in certain zipcodes, and every tenant facing eviction and earning less than \$49,200 for a family of four will be entitled to a lawyer by 2022.

Tenants who make more than that won't get a lawyer to represent them in court, but will get a brief consultation with legal experts before they appear.

De Blasio objected to having the bill cover NYCHA tenants appearing in administrative tribunals, which is often a first step before housing court. Under the version that was passed, there will be a pilot program set up to give legal assistance to those tenants, but the administration will get to decide what type of assistance and how many tenants it covers.

---

© 2016 New York Daily News