



DETROIT AND MICHIGAN CHAPTER
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD
ESTABLISHED 1937



June 2, 2023

36th District Court
421 Madison Street
Detroit, MI 48226

Chief Judge William McConico:

We are writing today to inform you that we will be conducting a Court Watch project in the 36th District Court's Landlord-Tenant Division. Members of our project include: Detroit residents, lawyers, and concerned community members. At Detroit Housing Court Watch, we believe that housing is a human right. We believe that housing justice is racial justice. We believe that all human beings deserve a place to call home and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Our project goal is to improve access to justice at the court for those most impacted by the eviction process: the tenants. Detroit's eviction rate- between 18-36% according to the 2022 Stout Report- is several times higher than in similar midwestern cities. This high rate of filing contributes substantially to Detroit's steady population decline and to the mass displacement of majority Black Detroit residents.

We plan to begin our project with a focus on Detroit's Right to Counsel ordinance. The ordinance was passed over a year ago, in early May 2022, but Detroiters have yet to feel its benefit. Despite an October 1, 2022 deadline, the City has yet to fully fund the Right to Counsel program and many Detroiters continue to lack full legal representation as is required by ordinance. The continued lack of representation means that thousands of Detroiters experience an extreme imbalance of justice as most landlords do have legal representation. Data shows that simply having legal representation can keep tenants in their homes and prevent displacement and homelessness.

We are looking forward to the opportunity to participate in one of the most important democratic processes in the United States.

Sincerely,

Detroit Housing Court Watch