

RIGHT TO COUNSEL VOTE

November 14, 2019

CLS/PEPP Barrett Marshall

Good morning! I am honored to be here on what I know will be a historic day for the City of Philadelphia. Thank you, City Council, Council President Clarke, Councilmember Gym and co-sponsors of this bill to create a tenant's Right to Counsel.

I am Barrett Marshall, Director of the Philadelphia Eviction Prevention Project and attorney at Community Legal Services. Our work over the last two years with our incredible partners is a demonstration of the power of representation for tenants. We have proven that when we raise the voices of tenants, we create a better world. Together we have shown that we can prevent homelessness, stabilize communities, fight racism, and stem the rising tide of poverty in this City.

You've all heard the statistics. The eviction crisis is disproportionately affecting black women and their children. It is tearing apart long-standing communities. It is destroying the possibility of a future for so many families. And it is costing us dearly, in every way.

We know that legal representation has the power to change this. The power to create access, to generate equity, to save lives. We have seen the difference that this representation makes.

We know that home is our foundation. That stable housing is a health measure. We know that creating stability for individual families leads to healthy children, thriving communities, and a productive City. We know the value that home has for each of us. And we know how to protect it.

But what we must know, is that we have work to do.

Philadelphians will do the work. Our neighbors, our organizers, and our service providers are extraordinary. We will come together and we will lift each other, as we always have. But we need our City behind us. We need your support. Give us the chance to do what is necessary.

Give us the chance to do the work.

We are asking you to invest in all of us. In our survival and in our success. In the incredible ability that Philadelphians have to come together and create real, lasting change.

We have already begun and we know what we have to do. We ask that you stick with us, work with us, to save our homes and strengthen our communities.

We ask that, today, you see the work, you see our commitment to each other and to our City, and that you pass a tenant's Right to Counsel.

Thank you.