



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy A. Cooney

## Senator Cooney & Assemblymember Bronson Announce Newly Passed Rochester Housing Court Act

JEREMY A. COONEY October 13, 2021

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**(Rochester, NY)** Senator Jeremy Cooney (**D-Rochester**) and Assemblymember Harry Bronson (**D-Rochester/Chili/Henrietta**) announce the Rochester Housing Court Act (Chapter 464 of 2021) was signed into law by Governor Hochul. The bill creates an exclusive part of the Rochester City Court to enforce housing standards. This measure — which was co-sponsored by all the members of the Rochester Democratic delegation — will improve the quality of housing in the City of Rochester by enabling more effective enforcement of code violations and landlord and tenant rights. This critical law has had input and support from a broad segment of the community in the city of Rochester.

This law will accomplish several objectives, including bringing consistency and stability to cases brought by the City of Rochester for serious housing code violations and to landlord-tenant matters where complicated defenses are

raised. Additionally, the legislation gives the dedicated housing court judge broad power to remedy housing code violations. Moreover, creating a committee of local stakeholders will help bring systemic issues to light and allow for collaborative problem-solving.

**Senator Jeremy Cooney, Senate Sponsor**

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For those facing a housing concern, like discrimination or wrongful eviction, navigating the court system can be a challenge. By creating the first ever dedicated Rochester housing court, we will help families access legal support more smoothly and equitably. We are grateful to Governor Hochul for signing our bill into law and prioritizing the needs of Rochester tenants and homeowners.”

**Assemblymember Harry Bronson, Assembly Sponsor**

“Housing is a basic human right and we must do all we can to ensure safe, stable housing for the families of Rochester. Safe housing is a top priority of mine and this legislation will offer a dedicated venue to address serious issues impacting housing stability. This law will help guide families, property managers and landlords by providing consistency in the handling of housing. This important legislation will ensure our families a safe place to call home.”

**Mark Muoio, Legal Aid Society**

“I am grateful Assemblymember Bronson and Senator Cooney for their leadership in passing this bill and to Gov. Hochul for signing it in to law. The establishment of a housing court in Rochester is one more step toward securing safe, decent, and truly affordable housing for all Rochesterians. The Legal Aid Society of Rochester along with the partners at the Tenant Defense Project are proud to provide one of the most robust Access to Counsel programs in the nation for people facing eviction. We believe the Rochester Housing Court will help create a more just system for all parties in landlord tenant matters.”

**Tina Monshipour Foster, Executive Director, JustCause**

"Landlords and tenants alike have advocated for the establishment of a Rochester City Housing Court for many years. Thanks to Assemblymember Bronson and Senator Cooney, there is now state legislation which guarantees that Rochester residents will be heard in a dedicated Court specializing in housing matters. Not only will litigants save time and money, but they will have access to legal counsel and other services when they appear at the Hall of Justice. This is a win for everyone in our community."

**Bryan Hetherington, Retired Chief Counsel at Empire Justice Center**

"This law will make it easier for tenants and the City to make sure landlords follow the law and fix dangerous conditions in apartments. By having one judge preside over housing matters throughout the year, the court will be able to identify and deal effectively with landlords for whom violating the law is part of their business model. I want to thank Senator Cooney and Assemblymember Bronson for working with advocates for safe and decent housing in our community to get this important law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor."

**Johnathan Feldman, Legal Director, Empire Justice Center**

"The creation of a Rochester Housing Court provides a much-needed dedicated forum where tenant concerns will be heard, including on important issues regarding housing code violations. This will provide tenant advocates and City officials an avenue to address long-standing problems. We are confident that the Housing Court is another step in bringing meaningful and systemic improvements in the protection of tenants throughout Monroe County, and we thank our Rochester delegation for their leadership on this issue."

In addition to the Governor, Senator Cooney and Assemblymember Bronson acknowledge the help of extraordinary community partners and the determination and fortitude they have brought to safe, stable housing.

**Senator Samra Brouk**

"For too long, Rochester families have been failed by the shortcomings of our housing system, which is why I was relieved to hear that legislation I cosponsored to create a Rochester Housing Court was recently signed into law. Similar to established housing courts in Buffalo and New York City, our new Rochester Housing Court will not only consider matters related to real property law, but code enforcement, zoning and City ordinances meant to improve housing conditions and maintain a safe standard of living across our communities. I look forward to the Rochester Housing Court taking on these cases and making a difference for hardworking local families."

**Assemblywoman Sarah Clark**

"Finding safe and affordable Housing was an issue long before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has only worsened since last year. The creation of the Rochester Housing Court means more equitable resolutions over housing disputes between tenants and landlords. This will also address tenant, landlord, and homeowner concerns that affect our greater Rochester community, and hold all parties accountable to maintaining livable conditions that all tenants deserve. Our local delegation made this a priority early on. Thank you to Governor Hochul, Senator Cooney, and Assemblymember Bronson for your leadership and commitment to ensuring safe and affordable housing for all members of our community."

**Assemblymember Jennifer Lunsford**

“A dedicated housing court with an advisory board of community residents will help level the playing field in our courts, improve our housing stock and hold bad landlords to account for repeated violations. The broad powers this law lends the courts will ensure that the judges hearing these disputes are experts in housing and landlord-tenant matters.”

**Assemblymember Demond Meeks**

“In order to protect the rights of the members of our community, it is essential that we provide equitable representation. The pandemic has only exacerbated several long-standing issues including housing insecurity and has strained the relationship between landlords and tenants. I am proud of the members of our delegation for working to pass legislation that made the Rochester Housing Court a reality. To promote safe and stable homes in our communities, we have to address violations in a timely and effective manner that sets a clear standard for tenants and landlords.”

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