

Advocacy Overview

A core component of the EPP program was to identify potential policy solutions for addressing evictions in our city and county. The EPP pilot project was also intended to be flexible to address the crisis families are facing and to evolve with the changing landscape of the pandemic and governmental response.

As a result, issue areas have arisen that can inform our advocacy efforts moving forward & highlight areas for strengthening a more long-term eviction program in our community.

Issue Areas

- **Legal representation and crisis response** - With the moratoriums, attorney time was dedicated to in-court presence and education for tenants and, as a result, committee submissions for funding shifted “upstream” to address rent relief needs for households without scheduled court dates. *Moving forward, the funding will be reserved for attorney negotiations for pending eviction cases; one case, Rainbow Creek, is represented by Emily and funds will be reserved for the negotiation of housing for 15 households.*
- **Data Access and Consistency** - Part of the challenge we face is the consistency of court data and lack of data about landlords in our municipalities. We will have outcome & longitudinal for the EPP clients. *Moving forward we will need to discuss the following data areas as areas of potential advocacy: (1) Methodology and consistency of court data, (2) The lack of municipal data around landlords, and (3) Court Watch consistency for outcome data from court, (4) Sharing up and out (city, state, Eviction Lab)*
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis** - Cities in the country have worked with Stout to assess the cost/benefits of right to counsel programs and their consultant budget estimates a range from \$60,000 to basic analysis to \$300,000 inclusive of longitudinal data analysis. Given the importance of fiscal responsibility and need for determining the most effective housing interventions a mayor will consider, *we will need to assess the importance of this level of analysis for our policy proposal and its role in advocating for a potential right to counsel program.*
- **Program Structure** - Based on our conversations and research thus far, there seem to be four models for tenant legal representation to consider: (1) Non-profit entity with private funding utilizing dedicated staff and pro-bono attorneys, **(2) Legal Aid program with dedicated attorneys**, (3) Municipal program within city or county, (4) Eviction program in public defender’s office. *We will need to assess what structure would be best for our local context in terms of capacity, political will and resources + presence in court.*
- **Relationship Development** - In cities that have consistent legal representation programs, a key element is strong relationship development with the court system, judges, local service providers, local legal programs, and philanthropic partners. Another

potential partner may be small to medium size landlords and local property owners interested in engaging. *Moving forward, we will need to identify the partners who have shared interest in addressing the evictions within our community and begin outreach and to identify potential push back for buy-in. One potential action step is to establish a local coalition.*

- **Community Awareness and Buy-in / Organizing** - In 2020, we saw an activation around race justice issues, economic issues and public health. All of these interests overlap and align with housing and eviction issues and there will be a need to clearly communicate the role eviction plays in the issues community members care deeply about. *Moving forward, we will need to determine what communication methods / education strategies / community organizing can be utilized to gather community buy-in for policy proposals to a new administration.*
- **Policy Proposal Timeline** - Given the continuation and extension of the pandemic's impact on our community, our preliminary findings around the impact of the project, and the commitment of mayoral candidates to prioritizing housing and neighborhoods issues, it is clear that EPP's policy proposals will need to be specific and tied to budget projections. *Moving forward, it seems that the advocacy work should be focused on the development of concrete program and budget proposals (court process, data consistency, right to counsel, right to purchase, landlord/tenant, etc) that can be proposed to a sitting administration in concert with partners across the community.*