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IBO Takes a Close Look at the City's Right to Counsel Program

September 11, 2025 – The New York City Independent Budget Office has conducted an [analysis](#) of the City's Right to Counsel (RTC) program. IBO's analysis details the share of eviction cases filed that had court appearances, how case lengths have changed, and how the share of cases in court eligible for Right to Counsel has shifted over time. IBO also discusses these case-level trends in the context of the City's decisions to revise how legal service providers' contracts were structured. IBO's analysis shows that at present, over half of households served by the program are not receiving representation in housing court. In other words, **the goal of universal representation for eligible tenants has not yet been realized.**

New York City passed Right to Counsel in August 2017, becoming the first municipality in the country to provide legal representation for eligible tenants facing eviction. The City began rolling out the program in phases, starting with zip codes with the highest eviction rates. The City expected to phase in additional zip codes over time, with citywide implementation by July 2022. This gradual rollout was designed to give providers and the City time to build capacity as demand for services increased.

However, the program went citywide more than two years ahead of schedule amidst the pandemic era pause on evictions and state-level changes to tenant protection laws. When eviction cases resumed, they were longer and more complicated, and far more cases had become eligible for the program. These impacts were not visible for several years until after the pause on evictions ended.

Program contracts have not been updated to match the longer, more complex cases and expanded eligibility of today. Changes to contract rules, including limits on support for multi-year cases and the inclusion of performance-based metrics, have created both staffing and financial pressures for providers.

Despite this increased program eligibility and longer court proceedings, there were no notable increases in funding corresponding to the program's expansion. IBO found that **eligibility for representation in housing court under RTC more than doubled from 2022 through 2024** (increasing 110%) **while spending for RTC grew by only a third (33%).**

As these pressures combined, the share of tenants receiving legal representation in court has fallen sharply since RTC's citywide expansion. After peaking at over half of eligible tenants in 2022, representation rates have dropped to roughly one-third citywide in 2024. **As a result, many eligible tenants are facing eviction cases without the representation promised by this first in nation law.**

