

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia Office of the Chief Clerk Room 402, City Hall Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 250343)

RESOLUTION

Calling on the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to pass the Ready to Rent Act and increase housing opportunities for Pennsylvanians by automatically sealing most eviction records.

WHEREAS, A public eviction record is created every time a landlord files for eviction in Municipal Court, no matter the case's outcome; and

WHEREAS, Eviction records can be found online by anyone, no matter how much time has passed nor a tenant's subsequent history of on-time rent payment; and

WHEREAS, Most Philadelphians' eviction records are from cases where they were unrepresented by an attorney; and

WHEREAS, Four in ten Philadelphians' eviction records are default judgments for the landlord, meaning that a judge did not decide the case on its merits; and

WHEREAS, Research from the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School showed that Philadelphians who live further away from Municipal Court and rely on public transit were more likely to have a default judgment against them because they could not make it to their hearing in time; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reports that one in five eviction records may contain false or ambiguous information; and

WHEREAS, Twenty percent of eviction filings in Pennsylvania do not result in any kind of judgment, though the record remains for all time; and

WHEREAS, A study by Community Legal Services of Philadelphia and the University of Michigan found that eight in ten tenants reported that an eviction filing limits their housing opportunities and that roughly half of tenants experienced a period of homelessness after an eviction filing; and

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WHEREAS, The same study found that four in ten tenants reported being less likely to exercise their legal right to request repairs because they did not want to risk retaliation and lose their housing with nowhere else to go; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia has been a leader in protecting returning citizens from discriminatory treatment based solely on the content of their criminal record or eviction history, legislating Fair Criminal Record Screening Standards in 2011 and the Renters Access Act in 2021; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been a national leader in Clean Slate policies that allow people with years-old criminal records to move on with their lives; and

WHEREAS, Arizona, California, Colorado, New Jersey, Nevada, and Utah have all adopted automatic, mandatory limited-access or sealing for broad categories of eviction records; and

WHEREAS, The Ready to Rent Act, HB 1095, was introduced by the Honorable Representative Ismail Smith-Wade-El and its Senate counterpart SB 549, was introduced by Philadelphia's own Honorable Senator Nikil Saval; and

WHEREAS, The Ready to Rent Act would require Pennsylvania courts to limit who can access eviction records, sealing them seven years after the filing date, the same amount of time that federal law requires for bankruptcy cases; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Governor Josh Shapiro has also recognized the importance of eviction record sealing, and voiced his support by calling for the policy in his 2025 budget address; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby call on the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to pass the Ready to Rent Act and increase housing opportunities for Pennsylvanians by automatically sealing all eviction records seven years after the cases are filed.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twenty fourth day of April, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Landau

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Landau, Phillips, Gauthier, Thomas, Brooks
and O'Rourke