

Cleveland Municipal Court

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Statement on Recent Cleveland City Council Legislation *Access to Legal Representation for Low-Income Tenants Facing Eviction*

Cleveland, OH – Cleveland Housing Court Judge Ron O'Leary issued the following statement:

“City Council introduced legislation that will help provide legal representation to low-income tenants who are facing eviction. The Court supports initiatives that help parties—including property owners, landlords, and tenants—know and enforce their legal rights. Attorneys can do a great service by educating the public and helping to ensure that court proceedings remain fair and equitable.

This desire to educate landlords, tenants, and property owners is the focus of many of the Housing Court's initiatives. We offer workshops—“*What Every Tenant Should Know*” and “*What Every Landlord Should Know*”—to educate the public about their legal rights and responsibilities in an attempt to help them avoid the eviction process entirely.

We created our Social Service Referral Program that assisted more than 400 individuals last year. This program helps both tenants and property owners find resources that can offer financial and other assistance.

Housing Court offers mediation services to help landlords and tenants resolve their disputes with agreements that provide either an opportunity for the tenant to remain in the premises or a have “soft landing” and controlled exit from it.

The Court has twelve Housing Specialists on staff who offer information about the Ohio Landlord Tenant Act and court procedure free of charge—five days a week—in our Housing Clinic. The number of visitors to our Clinic has increased markedly since Cleveland Tenants' Organization closed in early 2018.

Evictions are the result of a number of complex financial, social, and personal forces. Realistically, they will continue to occur and will continue to present what is often a lose-lose situation for both landlord and tenant. Making all parties aware of their rights and responsibilities—preferably before an issue arises—will help limit the number of eviction actions filed. Attorneys representing more tenants will assist in this effort.

Housing Court will continue to decide cases before it as the law requires. At the same time, our staff will continue its educational efforts for both landlords and tenants because the best landlord-tenant relationship is one that never has to come to court.”