

FACT SHEET: The White House and Department of Justice Announced 99 Law Schools in 35 States and Puerto Rico Continue to Answer the Attorney General’s Call to Action for Stronger Access to Justice and Court Reform on Eviction Prevention

Today, the White House and the Department of Justice announced 99 law schools have responded to the [Attorney General’s Call to Action to the Legal Profession](#), issued on August 30, 2021, to address the housing and eviction crisis. The Attorney General’s Call to Action asked lawyers and law students to take immediate action to help their communities through Emergency Rental Assistance application support, volunteering with legal aid providers, helping courts implement eviction diversion programs, among other initiatives aimed at increasing housing stability and access to justice.

The Response from the Legal Profession to the Attorney General’s Call to Action was Swift and Wide Reaching and Helped to Keep Eviction Filings Below 60% of Historic Averages.

- ✓ **99 law schools in 35 states and Puerto Rico immediately committed their law schools to help prevent evictions.** These law schools worked with faculty and students to take immediate and meaningful action to combat the crisis. (See appendix for list of law schools and activities.)
- ✓ **Over the past five months, over 2,100 law students dedicated over 81,000 hours to serve over 10,000 households,** based on a survey tracking the effort facilitated by Georgetown University Law Center Dean William Treanor and New York University School of Law Dean Trevor Morrison.

The Biden-Harris Administration Implemented a Whole-of-Government Push to Encourage Immediate Relief and Lasting Reform on Eviction Policy Nationwide.

The Call to Action by the Attorney General and the response from 99 law schools is part of a whole-of-government approach to help millions of families keep up on rent and remain in their homes. The effort has led to increased access to counsel and eviction prevention in jurisdictions across the country.

- ✓ On March 29, 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration announced [multi-agency efforts to get tenants and landlords the assistance they need](#) during the public health crisis. As part of the strategy, the Administration worked quickly to streamline and simplify rules to access American Rescue Plan funding to keep people in their homes.
- ✓ On June 24, 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration announced [initiatives to promote housing stability](#) and [Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta sent a pathbreaking letter to state courts](#) encouraging them to immediately establish eviction diversion programs and directing them to federal resources and the [National Center for State Courts diversion tool](#). State Supreme Courts in Michigan, Indiana, and Texas adopted statewide eviction diversion programs, along with jurisdictions in 31 states.
- ✓ On June 24, 2021, [Treasury issued guidance strongly encouraging the use of ERA housing stability funds for access to counsel and eviction diversion programs](#) as tools to help families remain in their homes.
- ✓ Over the summer and early fall, the White House hosted three Summits on Eviction Prevention.
 - On June 30, 2021, [the White House hosted the first-ever Summit on Eviction Prevention](#), which featured a public plenary on best practices in eviction diversion and brought together 46 of the highest eviction risk cities to share best practices on eviction prevention, diversion practices, and ERA distribution.
 - On July 21, 2021, [the White House hosted the second Summit on Eviction Prevention](#). This convening featured county judges and public officials who had successfully implemented eviction diversion programs and distributed ERA.

- On September 9, 2021, [the White House hosted the third Summit on Eviction Prevention](#) which featured mayors, governors, and county officials overseeing high performing ERA programs and successful diversion programs.
- ✓ On August 11, 2021, [Attorney General Merrick Garland met with nearly 40 state supreme court chief justices](#) to emphasize eviction diversion strategies and issued a Call to Action to states to implement eviction diversion programs. The Attorney General's [Call to Action to the Legal Profession](#) followed shortly after on August 30, 2021.
- ✓ On August 11, 2021, [Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, White House Counsel Dana Remus, and Attorney General Merrick Garland convened a listening session](#) with legal aid providers, pro bono counsel, and a State Attorney General to identify and expand creative innovations in access to justice, including those designed to keep renters in their homes.
- ✓ On August 17, 2021, [officials from the White House, Departments of Labor, Treasury, Justice, Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention met with the U.S. Conference of Mayors](#), urging mayors to adopt eviction diversion strategies and highlighting best practices for swift delivery of ERA.
- ✓ In October 2021, [Treasury launched a website that spotlights eviction diversion](#) and prevention models and provides tool to help ERA grantees and community stakeholders take actionable steps to adopt eviction diversion. Treasury also dedicated a site to promising practices among [ERA programs to prevent eviction](#).
- ✓ On October 29, 2021, [the White House reconvened the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#) and released its report, [Access to Justice in the Age of COVID-19](#), which underscored the urgent need, and the federal response to, housing and evictions.

Broad Legal Community Answered the Call of Attorney General: Beyond law schools, Presidents of several major legal organizations, including the American Bar Association, National Bar Association, Hispanic National Bar Association, National Conference of Bar Presidents, and Legal Services Corporation, adopted eviction prevention as a priority and encouraged action among members. Within 24 hours of the Attorney General's Call to Action, the Association for Pro Bono Counsel and Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, which has nearly 300 law firm members, hosted trainings for hundreds of pro bono attorneys on assisting tenants with ERA applications.

Historic Progress on Emergency Rental Assistance Program - Aiding Renters and Preventing Evictions: The rapidly increasing pace of rental assistance, along with efforts to put into place eviction diversion programs, helped dramatically increase relief for those in need following the end of the national eviction moratorium. Instead of the predicted tsunami of evictions, because of the Administration's efforts to implement rental assistance programs and provide flexibility to grantees, eviction filings have remained below 60% of historic averages nationally and well below the 3.7 million evictions filed in a typical year. Representing a historic effort to prevent eviction, well over 3 million households received Emergency Rental Assistance under the program, with approximately [\\$25-\\$30 billion in ERA funds either spent or obligated by the end of 2021](#).

99 Law Schools Took Meaningful Action to Expand Access to Justice and Increase Housing Stability: On the same day the Attorney General issued the Call to Action, the Deans of 99 law schools issued a statement of support and committed to take immediate and meaningful action to combat the eviction and housing crisis. The law schools acted with urgency and, over the past five months, have continued to draw on resources—such as pro bono and externship programs, clinical offerings, and the service of the larger law school communities—to respond to the Attorney General's call. Law schools partnered

with ERA programs, community-based organizations, and trusted community leaders to increase access to crucial resources and legal assistance. Law students volunteered to support pro bono and legal services attorneys by identifying families facing eviction, conducting intake and research, and drafting motions. Clinics partnered with courts to create eviction diversion programs, eviction defense walk in clinics, and “lawyer and law student of the day” programs. In communities across the country, law students hosted pop up clinics, help-a-thons, ERA application workshops, and canvassed in high risk communities to ensure tenants had access to justice and increased housing stability.

APPENDIX A

Examples of Law School Responses to the Attorney General’s Call to Action to the Legal Profession

Rutgers University Law School: *Dedicated \$2 Million in State Funding to Establish Cross-Campus and Statewide Anti-Eviction Initiative to Address the Crisis.* Across campuses, Rutgers University Law School dedicated \$2 million in state funding to increase the school’s ability to ramp up eviction prevention efforts. The Law School hired multiple new housing attorneys to represent clients and supervise students in eviction defense work. Students served over 350 households and dedicated over 3,700 hours to increasing housing stability in the community in the fall 2021 semester alone.

On the Newark campus, students faced the challenge of finding tenants. The courthouse, where tenants typically connect with law students and attorneys, had been closed since March 2020, leaving tenants to navigate online evictions without assistance. Associate Professor of Law Norrinda Brown Hayat established a Housing and Tenant Solidarity Clinic with the goal of making tenants aware of pending cases, ERA, and counsel. Students conducted file review to identify pending evictions and provided legal and ERA application assistance to tenants with upcoming hearings. Students also launched the Stop Evicting Newark: Know Your Rights Campaign, in partnership with Newark Water Coalition. Every week, law students participated in clean water and food distributions to offer on the spot assistance with ERA applications and legal representation. Students engaged with over 200 community members in high risk communities each week. In addition, students created short, multi-lingual informational videos that were amplified by community groups and through social media to maximize visibility of ERA and available legal assistance. The law school’s Camden campus developed a Housing Justice Clinic aimed at increasing eviction defense, as well as a new pro bono project to connect tenants with rental assistance and help them apply for dismissal of their eviction case.

New York University School of Law, in Partnership with Fordham University

School of Law: *Launched the New York City Housing Justice Initiative to Train Over 80 Law Students to Increase Access to Emergency Rental Assistance.* Within two days of the Attorney General’s Call to Action, Professors Sateesh Nori and Julia McNally of New York University’s (NYU) Housing Law Clinic, gathered nearly 100 clinical and pro bono law school programs to expand law schools’ contributions to eviction prevention in their communities. The NYU Housing Law Clinic partnered with Fordham University School of Law and the New York Legal Aid Society to launch the Housing Justice Initiative and train over 80 law students across the city to assist tenants at risk of eviction in applying for ERA. Students in NYU’s Housing Law Clinic also provided legal assistance to prevent evictions and improve housing conditions. In just the fall semester, students helped nearly 60 families stay housed and are continuing their efforts this spring. For the students the opportunity to help a family stay safely housed is transformational. “Working with tenants and vulnerable populations to provide assistance can really

help shape students' sense of themselves as public interest lawyers and their sense of having a future in public interest law," McNally [said](#).

Wayne State University School of Law: *Filling the Justice Gap in Detroit in Partnership with Legal Services.* When the Attorney General issued the Call to Action, it struck close to home for the Wayne State University School of Law. Located in Detroit, the eviction crisis was dire and the end of the eviction moratorium meant widespread homelessness and displacement. Dean Richard Bierschbach gathered the pro bono, experiential, and clinical faculty to immediately launch the Warrior Eviction Defense Corps, a partnership with the City of Detroit, United Community Housing Coalition, and Lakeshore Legal Aid, with the goal of providing legal representation to the thousands of tenants facing eviction. Under the supervision of experienced attorneys, students in the Corps staff eviction dockets, conduct client intake, draft pleadings and settlement documents, and negotiate conditional dismissals on behalf of tenants. Thanks to a statewide eviction diversion order issued by Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget McCormick, students can help tenants pause their eviction proceeding in order to access the ERA program. Students also participate in direct tenant outreach to support the work of Detroit's Eviction Prevention Team. This spring, the Corps plans to add a court watch project and legal research to support a right to counsel program in Detroit.

Pro bono students participating in University of Michigan School of Law's COVID-19 Corps team also partnered with Lakeshore Legal Aid to meet the growing demand for legal assistance. As Maiya Moncino, the group's law student founder [said](#), "Medical staff are on the front lines, but lawyers are confronting the pandemic's shockwaves. COVID-19 has created a whole host of legal problems. We want to show up for our communities."

University of Nebraska College of Law: *Students Fueled the Tenant Assistance Project to Increase Access to Counsel and Drastically Reduce Immediate Evictions – 98% of Represented Tenants Avoided Immediate Eviction.* The students at Nebraska University College of Law are the first to point out the unfairness of the eviction system in the state: less than 2% of tenants have access to legal representation, state law does not require actual notice of a hearing, and—without counsel—over 80% of cases result in eviction, often on the same day as the hearing. When first creating the Tenant Assistance Project, which grew significantly thanks to the Attorney General's Call to Action, faculty and law students wanted to ensure that every tenant facing eviction had an advocate in their corner. The Tenant Assistance Project, a partnership between the Law School and over 20 organizations, including the Nebraska State Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project and Legal Aid of Nebraska, expanded from a small group of dedicated volunteers to a community of students engaged with a statewide effort to prevent the eviction crisis, thanks to the Attorney General's Call. Law students are taking a multi-prong strategy to assist over 400 households over the last five months that includes: conducting file review to identify at risk tenants, making direct contact with every household with a pending eviction hearing to offer them ERA application assistance and legal representation, preparing eviction defense packets for pro bono attorneys in every case, and engaging in courthouse advocacy on the day of hearings. As a result of the program, 98% of represented tenants avoided immediate orders of eviction.

Atlanta Area Law Schools: *Over 300 Law Students from Atlanta Area Law Schools Provided Pro Bono Support to Attorneys Statewide.* Just as the Attorney General issued the Call to Action, legal nonprofits across the state of Georgia were seeing a spike in low-income families facing housing

instability. Law schools in the Atlanta region answered the Attorney General’s Call to Action by providing the pro bono support necessary to meet the need. John Marshall School of Law first asked for “pro bono heroes” to answer the call by participating in a help-a-thon with Georgia Free Legal Answers. In addition, Georgia State University and John Marshall law students collaborated with Georgia Legal Services Program, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and Atlanta Legal Aid Society to staff an emergency situation intake project, provide ERA application support, and support pro bono attorneys with eviction defense cases. Law students were able to inform vulnerable renters of their rights, screen for ERA eligibility, and connect them to pro bono or legal aid attorneys. Pro bono volunteers working with Georgia Legal Services Program assisted over 350 tenants and helped obtain more than \$3.1 million for clients in need across 100 cities in Georgia. With Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, they conducted outreach to an additional 1,000 households.

Wake Forest University School of Law: *64 Students Dedicated over 820 Hours to Partner with Medical Providers and Connect Families in Need with ERA.* When the Attorney General issued the Call to Action, Dean Jane Aiken quickly mobilized the school’s pro bono program and the medical-legal partnership clinic, a collaboration with Wake Forest School of Medicine, the Downtown Health Plaza, and Legal Aid of North Carolina, to respond to the urgent eviction crisis. To Professor Allyson Gold, the director of the clinic, it was clear that ERA would be the most direct and fastest way to protect tenants from the imminent threat of eviction. The clinic partnered with the county’s ERA program to ramp up the visibility and accessibility of the program in the highest risk communities. Students created dual language flyers and posters, canvassed in the community, and hosted multiple community-based workshops to assist tenants with their applications. Between direct outreach and representation, 64 students dedicated 820 hours to serve 110 households. “This would not have been possible without ERA’s unprecedented funding,” said Katie Merlin, a third-year law student who helped organize the school’s response. “We believe access to the American Rescue Plan’s ERA program is the reason that eviction rates are at historic lows in our community.” Law, medical and undergraduate students also collaborated to train Downtown Health Plaza medical providers who serve low-income patients to screen for eviction risk and to refer them for ERA and legal assistance. Pro bono students collaborated with Legal Aid of North Carolina to develop know your rights flyers and a housing law manual for tenants and pro bono attorneys.

Washington, D.C. Area Schools, Led by Georgetown University Law Center: *Launched Community-Based Clinics and Partnered with Medical Providers to Reach Those In Need of Assistance.* Georgetown University Law Center was among the first to answer the Attorney General’s Call to address the eviction crisis and protect the many Washington, D.C. residents in danger of losing their homes. Students from Georgetown University Law Center, along with students from George Washington University and American University Washington College of Law, assisted tenants with ERA applications at pop-up clinics hosted by the D.C. Office of the Attorney General. The effort prevented over two dozen scheduled evictions immediately following the Attorney General’s Call. In addition, Georgetown’s Health Justice Alliance, a collaboration between Georgetown Law and Georgetown University Medical Center, expanded its work to increase legal representation of tenants and provide medical partners with trainings and materials necessary to help patients understand their rights, access ERA, and avoid eviction. Students also distributed information about ERA and eviction prevention to 500 families in the District’s lowest-income schools and conducted “public benefits” check-ups for all clients to increase financial assistance.

Duke University School of Law: *50 Student Volunteers Established a Court-Based Eviction Prevention Legal Clinic to Ensure Legal Representation to Over 100 Individuals.* In Durham, North Carolina, the pandemic exacerbated what Duke Law faculty describe as a longtime eviction crisis. Clinic Director Charles Holton, Professor Jesse Hamilton McCoy II, and student coordinator Amanda Joos recognized the immense and immediate need and launched the Eviction Advice Clinic at the Durham County Courthouse. With over 50 student volunteers, they have been able to staff the clinic every week since the Call to Action and provide on the spot legal advice, representation, and assistance with ERA applications. In five months, the students represented approximately 100 individuals who would have otherwise been unrepresented and left to navigate the eviction system under the looming threat of displacement.

Boston University School of Law: *Leveraging Technology to Increase Tenant Access to Justice.* As a leader in social justice and civil rights law, Boston University (BU) Law Dean, Angela Onwauchi-Willig recognizes that “Few things are more disruptive and destructive to a person’s life than eviction. You lose your home, your community, your stability—basically, with an eviction, you lose all that you have known, all at once.” So, she did not hesitate to heed the Attorney General’s Call to Action to close the justice gap through the school’s clinical work. In Boston, throughout the pandemic, traditional methods for accessing legal representation were often unavailable due to court and help desk closures and pandemic mitigation protocols. To ensure tenants had meaningful access to assistance, BU Law leveraged technological platforms and launched a pro bono service project using the [MA Defense for Eviction Portal](#), an online portal created by Quinten Steenhuis and available through Greater Boston Legal Services to help tenants respond to eviction actions. The portal connects trained law students and translators with tenants who need assistance drafting and filing legal pleadings within a short window to avoid immediate evictions. BU Law Clinical Instructor Jade Brown [reflected](#), “I really felt we could reach a large number of people. I know, having worked in legal services, just how overwhelmed the system is and how overwhelmed we were.”

APPENDIX B

Statement of Law School Deans in Support of the Attorney General’s Call to the Legal Community August 30, 2021

We, the deans of law schools across the United States, agree with Attorney General Garland that the legal profession is well positioned to provide support for tenants, landlords, and courts in the looming housing and eviction crisis. As law school deans responsible for training the next generation of lawyers to be stewards of an effective, equitable, and just legal system, we feel obliged to do our part. Therefore, we are working with our faculty and students to take immediate and meaningful action to combat this crisis. Drawing on resources such as our pro bono programs, clinical offerings, and the service of our larger law school communities, we will help ensure that families and individuals facing eviction have the legal representation, counseling, and assistance they need to exercise their rights, that those entitled to the support of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program are able to access it, and that eviction proceedings are conducted in a fair and just manner.

Alicia Ouellette
Albany Law School

Roger A. Fairfax, Jr.
American University Washington College of Law

Angela Onwuachi-Willig
Boston University School of Law

Michael T. Cahill
Brooklyn Law School
J. Rich Leonard
Campbell Law School

Larry Cunningham
Charleston School of Law

Eduardo R.C. Capulong
City University of New York School of Law

Lee Fisher
Cleveland-Marshall College of Law

Gillian Lester
Columbia Law School

Jens David Ohlin
Cornell Law School

Joshua P. Fershée
Creighton University School of Law

Kerry Abrams
Duke University School of Law

Luke Bierman
Elon University School of Law
Matthew Diller
Fordham University School of Law

William M. Treanor
Georgetown University Law Center

LaVonda N. Reed

Georgia State University College of Law

Colin Crawford
Golden Gate University School of Law

John F. Manning
Harvard Law School

Gail Prudenti
Hofstra University Maurice A. Deane School of Law

Danielle Holley-Walker
Howard University School of Law

Gordon Smith
J. Reuben Clark Brigham Young University Law School

Michael Waterstone
Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

Zelda B. Harris
Loyola University Chicago School of Law

Patricia Bennett
Mississippi College School of Law

Anthony Niedwiecki
Mitchell Hamline School of Law

Anthony W. Crowell
New York Law School

Trevor W. Morrison
New York University School of Law

Hari M. Osofsky
Northwestern Pritzker School of Law

G. Marcus Cole
Notre Dame Law School

Horace E. Anderson

Pace University Elisabeth Haub School of Law

Danielle M. Conway
Penn State Dickinson Law

James W. Houck
Penn State Law

Fernando Moreno Orama
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico Law
School

Jennifer Gerarda Brown
Quinnipiac University School of Law

Mark Martin
Regent Law School

Gregory W. Bowman
Roger Williams University School of Law

Rose Cuison-Villazor
Rutgers Law School

Kimberly Mutcherson
Rutgers Law School

William P. Johnson
Saint Louis University School of Law

Annette E. Clark
Seattle University School of Law

Kathleen M. Boozang
Seton Hall School of Law

Michael F. Barry
South Texas College of Law Houston

Jennifer M. Collins
Southern Methodist University Dedman School
of Law

John Pierre

Southern University Law Center

Darby Dickerson
Southwestern Law School

Michael A. Simons
St. John's University School of Law

Patricia E. Roberts
St. Mary's University School of Law

Jenny S. Martinez
Stanford Law School

Michèle Alexandre
Stetson University College of Law

Andrew Perlman
Suffolk University Law School

Craig M. Boise
Syracuse University College of Law

Robert B. Ahdieh
Texas A&M University School of Law

Dayna Bowen Matthew
The George Washington University Law School

Katharine T. Schaffzin
The University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys
School of Law

Elena B. Langan
Touro Law Center

Jennifer L. Mnookin
UCLA School of Law

Aviva Abramovsky
University at Buffalo School of Law, The State
University of New York

Mark E. Brandon

University of Alabama School of Law

Ronald Weich

University of Baltimore School of Law

David L. Faigman

University of California, Hastings College of the Law

Erwin Chemerinsky

University of California, Berkeley School of Law

Eboni S. Nelson

University of Connecticut School of Law

Jelani Jefferson Exum

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Laura Ann Rosenbury

University of Florida Levin College of Law

Bo Rutledge

University of Georgia School of Law

Camille Nelson

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa - William S. Richardson School of Law

Leonard M. Baynes

University of Houston Law Center

Johanna Kalb

University of Idaho College of Law

Donald B. Tobin

University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Eric J. Mitnick

University of Massachusetts School of Law

Mark D. West

University of Michigan Law School

Garry W. Jenkins

University of Minnesota Law School

Susan H. Duncan

University of Mississippi School of Law

Richard Moberly

University of Nebraska College of Law

Sergio Pareja

University of New Mexico School of Law

Marcilynn A. Burke

University of Oregon School of Law

Theodore W. Ruger

University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School

Amy J. Wildermuth

University of Pittsburgh School of Law

Wendy C. Perdue

University of Richmond School of Law

Robert A. Schapiro

University of San Diego School of Law

William C. Hubbard

University of South Carolina School of Law

Andrew T. Guzman

University of Southern California Gould School of Law

Robert K. Vischer

University of St. Thomas School of Law

Ward Farnsworth

University of Texas School of Law

Renée McDonald Hutchins

University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law

Michael Hunter Schwartz

University of the Pacific McGeorge School of
Law

Elizabeth McCormick
University of Tulsa College of Law

Elizabeth Kronk Warner
University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law

Risa L. Goluboff
University of Virginia School of Law

Mario L. Barnes
University of Washington School of Law

Chris Guthrie
Vanderbilt Law School

Jane Aiken
Wake Forest University School of Law

Carla D. Pratt
Washburn University School of Law

Nancy Staudt
Washington University School of Law

Richard A. Bierschbach
Wayne State University Law School

Amelia Smith Rinehart
West Virginia University College of Law

James McGrath
Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley
Law School

Sudha Setty
Western New England University School of Law

Heather K. Gerken
Yale Law School

Melanie Leslie
Yeshiva University Benjamin N. Cardozo