

Written Testimony as prepared for delivery in support of SB19-180 – Eviction Legal Defense Fund (Winter/McCluskie) to the Senate Judiciary Committee by Sarah Barnes, Manager of Special Policy Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign

- Chair Lee and members of the Committee, my name is Sarah Barnes and I’m the Manager of Special Policy Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 180, and thank you to Senator Winter for your leadership on this policy.
- We support this bill because there is a clear connection between stable housing and child well-being. Eviction, and the residential mobility and instability it causes, has negative impacts on children’s health and academic outcomes, and on their mental health and social-emotional development.
- And research shows that eviction has a disproportionate impact on kids, because families with children face eviction at significantly higher rates than other groups.ⁱ A study found that among families facing eviction who appear in court, those families with children disproportionately receive eviction judgments.ⁱⁱ
- Families who are evicted are more likely to experience homelessness or be forced to move into poor-quality housing, both of which place children’s safety, well-being, and healthy development in jeopardy. Children who experience high rates of residential instability or homelessness have lower academic achievement and delayed literacy skills. They are more likely to be truant and more likely to drop out of school. Increased residential mobility is also linked to higher rates of adolescent violence and children’s health risks.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Mothers who were evicted in the previous year have higher rates of maternal depression, which affects their children’s healthy development and also affects mothers’ ability to work and provide for their children.^{iv} Pregnant people who experience homelessness are much more likely to have pregnancy complications, and prenatal homelessness is associated with pre-term delivery and low-birthweight infants.^v
- Legal representation in an eviction proceeding is one way we can help increase the likelihood that children and families can stay in their homes. One study found that two-thirds of tenants who were represented by an attorney were able to stay in their homes, compared with only a third of tenants who were not represented in court.^{vi}
- This bill helps increase access to these legal services for families facing the most barriers to housing stability, which can help prevent the negative impacts of eviction on children and families. Thank you and we urge your support.

ⁱ First Focus Campaign for Children. (2017.) Children and Families Facing Eviction: Policy Recommendations to Support Stability.

ⁱⁱ Desmond M et al. (2013). Evicting Children. Social Forces. Harvard University.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} First Focus Campaign for Children. (2017.) Children and Families Facing Eviction: Policy Recommendations to Support Stability.

^v Cutts D et al. (2014). Homelessness During Pregnancy: A Unique, Time-Dependent Risk Factor of Birth Outcomes. Maternal Child Health Journal. Clark R et al. (2019). Homelessness Contributes To Pregnancy Complications. Health Affairs.

^{vi} The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2017.) How Free Legal Help Can Prevent Evictions.