

**2025**



# Housing & Health Equity Lab



## Annual Report 2025

**Yale School of Public Health**

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# Introduction & Lab Mission

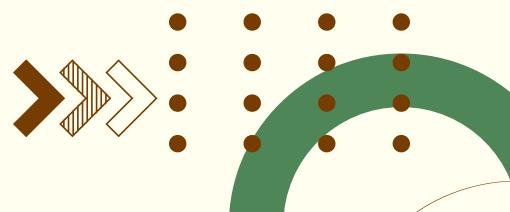


## Introduction

This April marked the 57th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, and in recognition of Fair Housing Month, the Housing and Health Equity Lab is proud to share this community report. It reflects our ongoing commitment to advancing equitable housing as a cornerstone of healthier, more just communities. Drawing on local voices, data-driven research, and collaborative initiatives, the report offers timely insights into the critical intersection of housing and health. As we move forward, we must continue to champion policies and investments that protect and expand the right to safe, affordable housing for all.

## Lab Mission

The Housing and Health Equity Lab investigates how housing access shapes population health, with a focus on the health impacts of the affordable housing crisis and the legacy of racialized housing and urban policies. Our work aims to uncover the mechanisms through which housing reinforces health inequities and to inform policy solutions that advance housing justice and health equity.



# A message from the Lab Director: Dr. Danya Keene



This report provides a brief summary of our lab's activities over the past year. This work would not have been possible without the support of many dedicated students, community partners, funders, and participants in these research studies. We are incredibly grateful to all who have made this possible.

This past year, our lab continued to document the health costs of unmet housing needs. We are in the process of wrapping up a 5-year NIH-funded study (Project ReSIDE) that explores how access to federal rental subsidies shapes diabetes outcomes. Our data show that when people have to wait on long waiting lists for housing subsidies, their health suffers. We hope that these data can be used to advocate for more investments in vouchers, public housing, and other forms of affordable housing. We are incredibly grateful to the 100+ ReSIDE participants who shared their stories with us throughout the study.

Our lab has also been working with partners at [Eviction Lab](#) to study the impacts of policies that can prevent eviction. In particular, we are grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for supporting our national study of Tenant Right to Counsel policies. We look forward to continuing our research on Right to Counsel through a new study called REACH Justice.

I also want to acknowledge some important accomplishments and milestones among our dedicated, talented, and passionate team of student researchers. Congratulations to Shannon Whittaker for completing her PhD. Shannon recently shared her dissertation findings about gentrification in New Haven at this fantastic [community event](#). I also want to congratulate University of Southern California Senior Amila Kapetanovic on her upcoming graduation. Amila began working with our lab as a high school student and has remained dedicated to the work over the course of her college career. And congratulations to 2024 graduate and lab alum, Frank Zhu, on the successful [publication](#) of his thesis and on completing his first year of medical school. Finally, congratulations to all our graduating students who we know will carry a passion for housing justice with them in their future endeavors.

Thank you again to all who continue to support our work. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our team with questions, comments, and feedback.

# Research Team



Danya Keene  
Lab Director  
Yale University



Penelope Schlesinger  
Lab Manager  
Yale University



Tricia Lewis  
Research Collaborator  
Sacred Heart University



Kim Blankenship  
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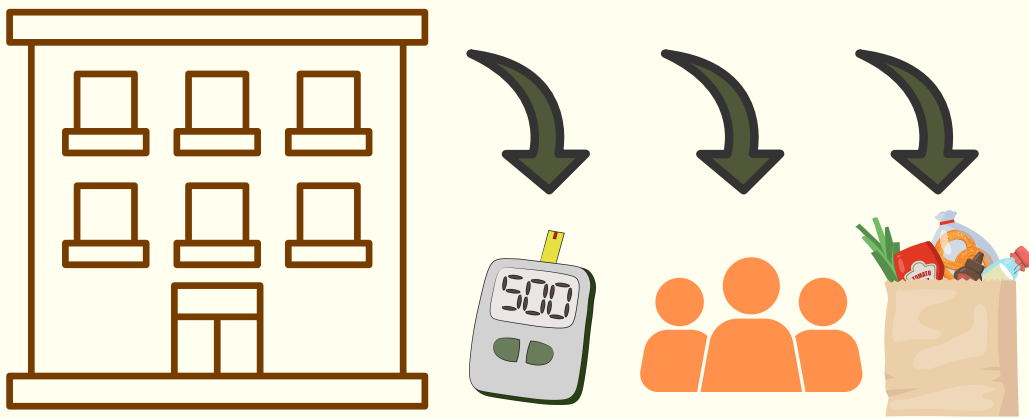


Fareed Salmon  
Yale College

# Project ReSIDE



Project ReSIDE is a five-year study funded by the National Institutes of Health (R01 DK124500-01) examining whether and how expanded access to affordable housing through rental assistance programs can improve diabetes management and control. ReSIDE findings point to the health harms of long waiting lists for federal rental assistance (e.g., vouchers and public housing). When our team used national data to compare those receiving rental assistance with those who were waiting to receive it, we found significant health differences.



**Rental assistance** not only reduces the cost of housing - it also **improves uncontrolled diabetes, decreases crowding and improves food security.**



As an extension of our larger research project, Lab members Princess Asante (Wesleyan University) and Penelope Schlesinger (YSPH) presented their poster, **Work or Wellness: How Work Shapes Diabetes Outcomes for Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.**, at the American Diabetes Association Annual Meeting.

As the study concludes this spring, we want to take a moment to acknowledge the amazing participants. **Thank you!** Without the contribution of your voices this research would not be possible.



# Right to Counsel



Our lab has also examined the health impacts of **Tenant Right to Counsel** policies. These policies provide tenants facing eviction with access to free legal assistance. In 2021, Connecticut became one of 3 states to implement statewide Right to Counsel. Our team conducted a qualitative evaluation of this policy, which is available [here](#).

Right to Counsel policies have expanded rapidly over the last few years. In March 2020, there were only 5 jurisdictions with Right to Counsel. In 2024, 17 cities, 4 states, and one county adopted RTC ([see map here](#)). In collaboration with researchers at other institutions, we conducted a national study to examine variation in how these policies are designed and implemented, and how this variation shapes their impacts. You can read about the findings from this study [here](#) or view this [TikTok](#).

*"I don't know how but with having legal aid in your corner, I don't know if they somehow did something or they are one step ahead of a regular person off the street, but with legal aid I was able to get approval and get put on programs that I don't think I could have otherwise gotten onto." - Andrea (Cleveland Tenant)*

Lab Member Leah Robinson recently wrote a qualitative paper about Cleveland's Right to Counsel program (RTC-CL), drawing on insights from tenants, legal aid attorneys, and other stakeholders. **Tenants who accessed RTC reported better housing outcomes, reduced stress, and a greater sense of fairness—underscoring RTC's potential to promote racial equity and address systemic housing injustice.**



LAW



Cornell Brooks  
Public Policy



# Emergency Rental Assistance



In this National Institutes of Health (R01NR020748) project, we explored the lived experience of eviction prevention policies using in-depth interview data collected with a diverse sample of renters across two distinct policy landscapes (Bridgeport, CT and Columbus, OH).



Lab members Kyra and Tricia attended the Eastern Sociological Society Conference on March 6, 2025 where they presented their oral presentation titled:

***“It was hard getting up the rent”: Renters experiences with Emergency Rental Assistance***

Drawing on 56 interviews with adult renters who experienced housing insecurity during the pandemic in Bridgeport, CT, and Columbus, OH, we explored interactions with the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA programs). For some renters, ERA provides vital temporary support that allows them to weather an acute economic crisis. For many other renters, ERA was a temporary solution to an immediate crisis, but it failed to address the institutional housing crisis. Other renters were locked out of receiving ERA funding altogether, whether because they were unaware of the program or ineligible due to participation in the informal economy. Our results demonstrate that with enough political will, it is possible to prevent evictions and ensure stable housing for families.

**Big thanks to our community collaborators and the participants who shared their stories!**



# Op-Eds

- **Uncertainty Harms Public Health** - Public assistance programs were designed to support vulnerable individuals. Their abrupt discontinuation or threats to that end create instability, breeding distress and worsening health outcomes.
- **How Johnson v. Grants Pass highlights CT's need to invest in homeless services** - The Supreme Court case *Johnson v. Grants Pass*, which permits the criminalization of homelessness, highlights Connecticut's urgent need to invest in homeless services and affordable housing.



## Recent Publications

- Association Between Rental Assistance Programs and Undiagnosed Diabetes Among U.S. ([read more here](#))
- A Descriptive Analysis of Tenant Right to Counsel Law and Praxis 2017–2024 ([read more here](#))
- Blending research and advocacy, Yale's Housing and Health Equity Lab tackles homelessness through a scientific lens ([read more here](#))
- Do Rental Assistance Programs Relieve Overcrowding for Children? ([read more here](#))
- Eviction from rental housing and its links to health: A scoping review ([read more here](#))
- Race, wealth and health: The role of reparations ([read more here](#))
- Tenant right to counsel and health: Pathways and possibilities ([read more here](#))
- Work or Wellness: How Work Shapes Diabetes Outcomes for Low-Wage Workers in the U.S. ([read more here](#))

# New Projects:



Reach Justice is a five-year (2024-2029) study funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). This research project seeks to understand how policies related to the criminal legal and housing systems are associated with health and as such, represent interventions that, both independently and together, can promote or undermine health equity goals.

## Action Items



### 2025 Policy Legislation

Lab Members provided testimony on a number of bills this year, including:

- HB 6889 - An Act Concerning Evictions for Cause would extend Just Cause eviction protections to a wider range of Connecticut renters.
- HB 6948 - An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities which would prohibit housing providers from denying rental applications based solely on a prospective tenant's criminal history after a specified period of time.

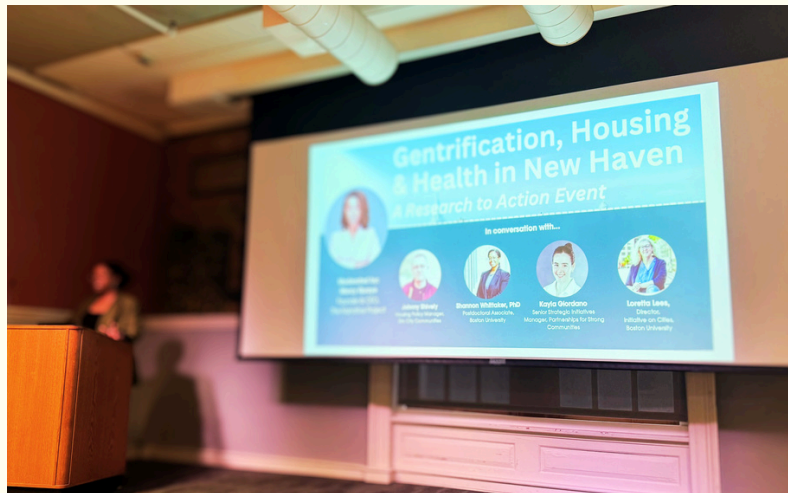
### Housing Resources

- Elm City Communities open enrollment for Rental Assistance waitlist in New Haven, CT.
- New Haven Housing Developments that are accepting applications for initial lease up in their income restricted units.
- City of New Haven Security Deposit and Utility Program - one-time assistance to help individuals and families pay security deposits and utility debts.
- CT RAP - state-supported program assisting low-income families to afford housing in the private market.

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**Questions or feedback? Please reach out to us - The Housing and Health Equity Lab**

# Thank You!



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