MARY SHEFFIELD
COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
DISTRICT 5

MEMORANDUM

TO: David Whitaker, Director, Legislative Policy Division
FROM: Council President Pro Tempore Mary Sheffield, Chair, Neighborhoods and Community Services Committee
THRU: Scott Benson, Chair, Public Health and Safety Committee
DATE: September 14, 2018
RE: Right to Counsel Ordinance

At least half of all tenants fighting eviction would not lose their case if they had legal representation. Additionally, about 97% of cases in housing court are initiated by landlords, and almost all landlords have representation while the vast majority of tenants do not. This results in landlords evicting tenants because they have power, not because the law supports them. Furthermore, landlords sue tenants they shouldn’t because they can get away with it - telling tenants that the case is a simple issue of paying rent which denies tenants access to the power of complex and vast housing laws designed to defend their homes.

Therefore, I am requesting that the Legislative Policy Division draft a Right to Counsel Ordinance for housing eviction cases. The legislation should utilize ordinances in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco as model legislation.

Please contact Brian White at 313-224-4505 if you have any questions.