



Representatives from the City-Wide Tenant Union of Rochester and supporters rally outside of Yadira Susseth’s apartment on Jefferson Avenue to fight her eviction notice and get people to rally behind good cause eviction practices. PHOTOS BY TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Tenants demand rights

Rochester woman says she’s being evicted for no reason

Christina Chkarboul Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

On Wednesday afternoon, Rochester tenants and housing advocates rallied outside a duplex in the Susan B. Anthony neighborhood to protest what they say is a no-cause eviction. Roughly 15 people sang, chanted and held signs in support of Rochester resident Yadira Susseth. ● Tenants’ rights advocates who stood behind Susseth used the situation to demonstrate why they believe Rochester needs a strong “good cause eviction” law to help tenants like Susseth stay in their homes as long as they pay rent and don’t violate their leases.

Susseth, who experienced homelessness with the seven kids in her care in 2019 and an eviction last year, said she’s been issued an eviction notice again even though she hasn’t violated the lease.

“In Rochester, landlords don’t have to show they have a good reason to evict a tenant, so they can get rid of a hard-working, rent-paying tenant for no reason at all,” Susseth said.

Susseth is deeply frightened by the eviction notice her landlord filed on July 1, fearing homelessness once more.

“The stress is overwhelming. What if me and my seven kids become homeless again?” she said. “We’re desperately searching for a new place, spending dollar after dollar on application fees and Lyft rides to view apartments.”



Rochester Council member Mary Lupien joined members of the City-Wide Tenant Union and supporters outside Yadira Susseth’s apartment to fight her eviction notice.

How to make your voice heard

Christina Chkarboul
Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
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The City of Rochester has set four public input sessions in July and August on the proposed “good cause eviction” bill, which would increase protections for tenants and curtail significant rent increases.

Residents are invited to attend their district’s hearing to speak to their representative and give comments on the bill, which reached Rochester City Council in June. New York State introduced “good

See **EVICTION**, Page 7A

See **VOICE**, Page 7A

Eviction

Continued from Page 1A

Susseth said finding a suitable home for her family to move to has been difficult. She pointed to unregulated rents in Rochester, which leave tenants with a limited supply of safe and affordable units.

Until she finds another place to go, Susseth said she'll be staying right where she is.

"No family should have to go through what we've been through," she stated. "If we move, it will be on our terms, not because of an unjust eviction. I need to know my kids have a safe place to sleep at night."

Representatives from the City-Wide Tenant Union and other community members said they would risk arrest if authorities came to force them out.

One of Susseth's kids, 19-year-old Ember Arce, said the two evictions their family has faced have taken a toll on their siblings and mother.

"My mom is a single parent of eight, taking care of seven of us, which puts a lot of stress on her," Arce said. "To add on an unjust eviction notice is just plain wrong. This not only puts stress on our mother, but us kids. The fear of being homeless is real and scary."

Councilmember Mary Lupien, who focuses on housing rights and improving the quality of life in Rochester, said she was "really proud" to support Susseth. Stable housing, Lupien noted, is critical to helping families climb out of poverty and keep their livelihoods.



Yadira Susseth reads a prepared statement about her predicament during a rally outside her apartment on Jefferson Avenue in Rochester. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Susseth works as a special needs teacher for the Rochester City School District. "It's unconscionable what is happening right now that families in Rochester would be destabilized for no fault of their own other than the lack of good laws in place," Lupien said.

The "good cause eviction" law in Rochester City Council takes after the state law passed in April, which gave cities the option to opt-in. Under "good cause," landlords can't evict tenants without proving rent non-payment – not stemming from an unreasonable rent increase – or a violation of the lease. They also can't raise rents more than 5% plus the Consumer Price Index, or 10% altogether, whichever is lower.

The state gave cities leeway on a few exemptions, including the small landlord portfolio size. The state law exempts "small landlords" who own 10

units or less, but cities can choose between one and 10 units for that classification. Albany, Ithaca, Kingston, and Poughkeepsie have lowered that exemption to one unit, while Rochester's proposed bill keeps the maximum of 10. That means the law applies only to Rochester landlords who own 11 units or more.

"Right now, [the bill] wouldn't even cover Yadi's family from this; their landlord only owns about five units," said Lisle Coleman, who has worked with Susseth's family through the United Way of Rochester and the Finger Lakes. "We are going to lose out on many, many, many tenants having those protections."

– *Christina Chkarboul is a summer intern at the Democrat and Chronicle and a student journalist at USC, where she focuses on Earth science, global*



Lisle Coleman, a renter and with the City-Wide Tenant Union of Rochester, talks about affordable housing. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

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