Protecting Legal Rights, A Safety Net to Prevent Homelessness

Meeting People at Risk

Tenant Appointed Counsel

Eviction Defense, since 2021

Philippe Knab, Program Director, OCLA

Legal Counsel for Long-Term Care

Discharge defense, since Jan. 2026

Max Mendez Kauffman, Program Counsel, OCLA

Moderated by Ali Kingston, Tenant Appointed Counsel Program Manager

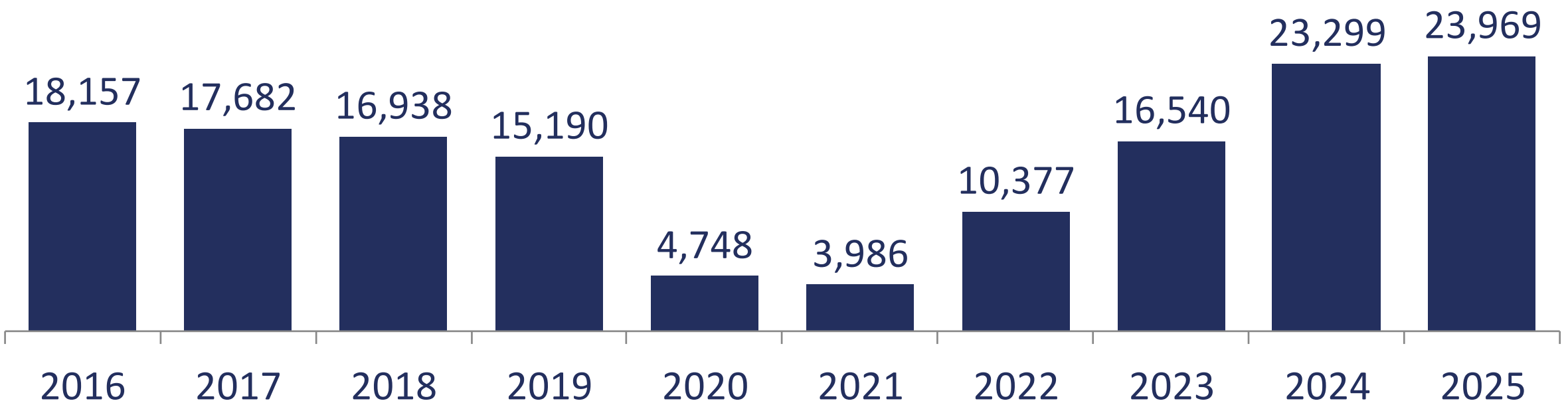
What eviction looked like without a lawyer

16,938

eviction cases filed in 2018

- **Landlords had counsel. Tenants did not.**
- **Most cases ended in default.**
- **No statewide eviction data existed.**

Things Keep Getting Harder for the Most Vulnerable



2018 baseline: 16,938 filings

July 2026: 2,413 filings, a record month

Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

The Landscape : Long-Term Care Before Counsel

What Discharge looked like in Washington without a representation right

The Landscape: The access gap

170

Eligible notices per month

18

cases represented per year

Fewer than 1 in 100 had counsel

The Landscape: No direct pathway

A hidden path to homelessness and hospitalization

- No statewide intake channel
- Informal referrals only
- Appeal rights rarely exercised
- Housing and care lost together

What it took to stand the program up

83

Attorneys hired and trained

37

Judicial districts connected

2

Days or less to screen

1

Statewide practice and data standard

How a tenant actually gets an attorney

1

Landlord starts

2

Court refers

3

Screening

4

Appointment

The tenant does not have to find us.

Every county in Washington. All thirty-nine.

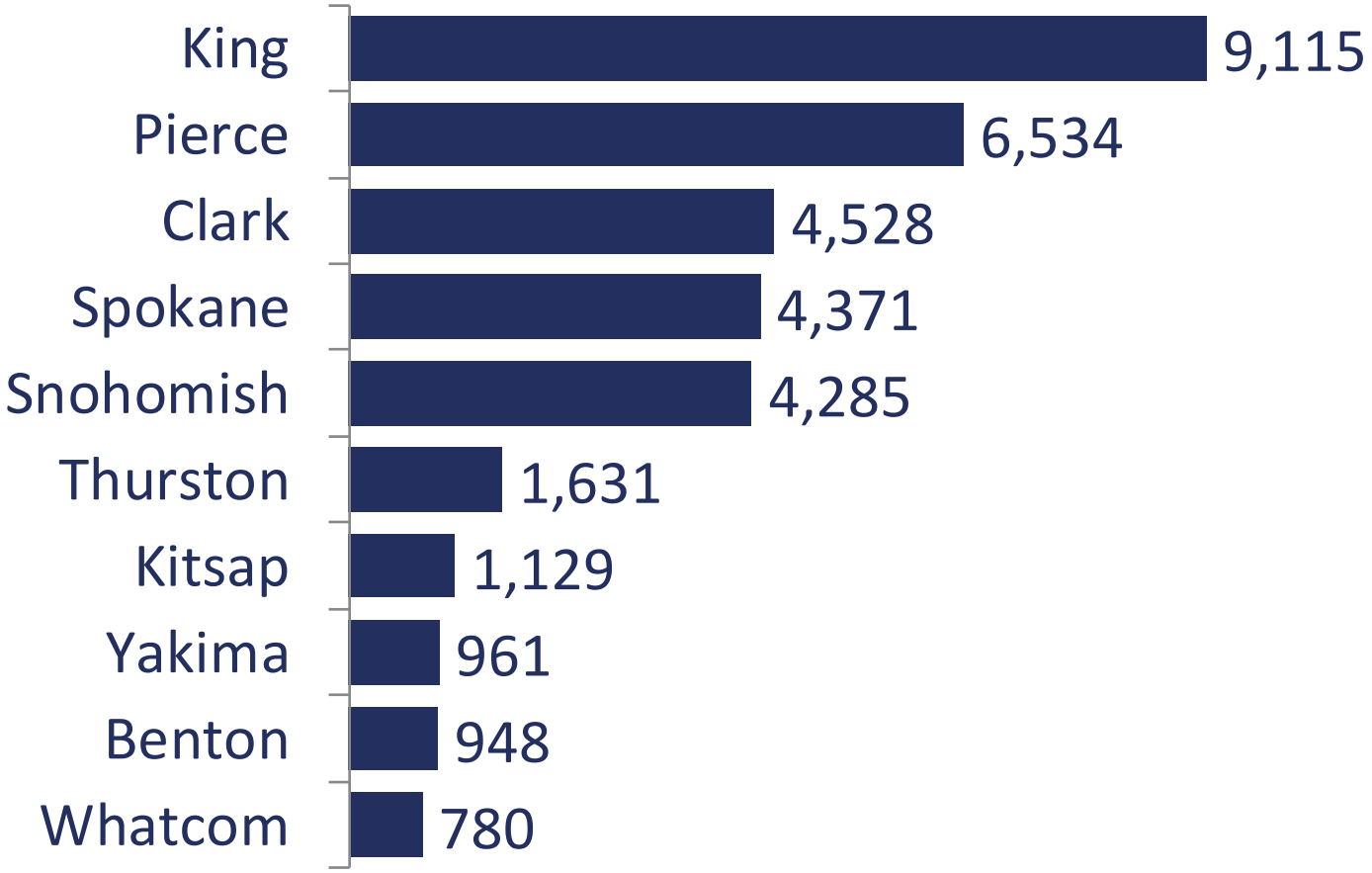
Highest volume

9,115	**6,534**	**4,528**	**4,371**
King	Pierce	Clark	Spokane

Lowest volume

4	**6**	**9**	**16**
Garfield	Ferry	Wahkiakum	San Juan

Capacity follows the caseload



Nearly 90% of cases are in 10 counties

Capacity moves as filings change

Rural coverage takes longer to build

Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

The Program: Legal Counsel for Long-Term Care

First in the nation. Launched January 5, 2026.

The Program: How it is Built

State funded, OCLA Administered

Contracted legal aid providers

Statewide reach

Built on the eviction defense model

The Program: Who it Serves

Medicaid eligible residents facing involuntary discharge, transfer, or eviction

- Adult family homes
- Assisted living facilities
- Enhanced services facilities

When in doubt, encouraged to call.

The Program: Eviction Parallel

	Eviction defense	Long-term care
Program start	2021	2026
Forum	Superior Court	Administrative hearing
Trigger	Eviction filing	Discharge notice
Served	tenants	residents

An extension of equity

The Program: The Broader Ecosystem

1

DSHS

Medicaid and benefits

2

Provider Landscape

Delivery of Care

3

Discharge Patterns

Vulnerability

4

Deterrence Effect

Preventing legal harm

Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

Outreach: No Court Calendar

Reaching residents isolated inside facilities

Outreach: Notice is often the only trigger

Eviction

A filing starts the case. The docket finds tenants

Long-Term Care

No filing, no docket, no calendar.

Nothing happens unless someone acts.

Outreach: The way to intake is through people

Ombuds, the first line
On the ground, first to see a notice, closes to the resident

Social workers and discharge planners
Inside facilities and hospitals, whether the clock starts

Case mangers and navigators
Holding the whole picture when system handoffs occur

Families, and residents themselves
With notices or a concrete risk of discharge can call directly

Outreach: Getting a case to counsel

1. **Concern or notice**
2. **Call or apply online**
3. **Intake and triage**
4. **Advice, resources, or representation**

No written notice required. Not every intake becomes full representation.

Why low-income renters do not show up

- Notice is the only trigger
- The timeline is short
- The process is confusing
- Good reasons to miss court

When counsel is appointed, not sought

Old model

- Find help yourself
- Hope for capacity
- Beat the hearing date

Appointed counsel

- Court identifies tenant
- Capacity is planned
- Hearing waits for capacity

A safety net is something you fall into, not something you have to find.

Attorneys make sure every resource is used before a tenant is displaced.

Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

Resource Navigation: What Counsel Does

Advice and solutions before a notice, hearing or discharge

Resource Navigation: The First Week

1

Read the notice for sufficiency

2

Find the real driver

3

Map the options with the resident, not for them

Resource Navigation: fixes short of a hearing

- Benefits repair
- Support for care plan adjustments
- Negotiated resolution with the facility
- Safe alternative placement
- Hearing representation when is counts

Complete care requires legal care.

Resource Navigation: When to call

Discharge notice	→	**Refer to intake**
Lost a bed	→	**Call before the move**
Hospital boarding	→	**Call early**

Intake and Screening line: (888) 437-0017
Online intake: https://disabilityrightswa.org/ltcrr-intake-form/

Three out of four cases end without a writ

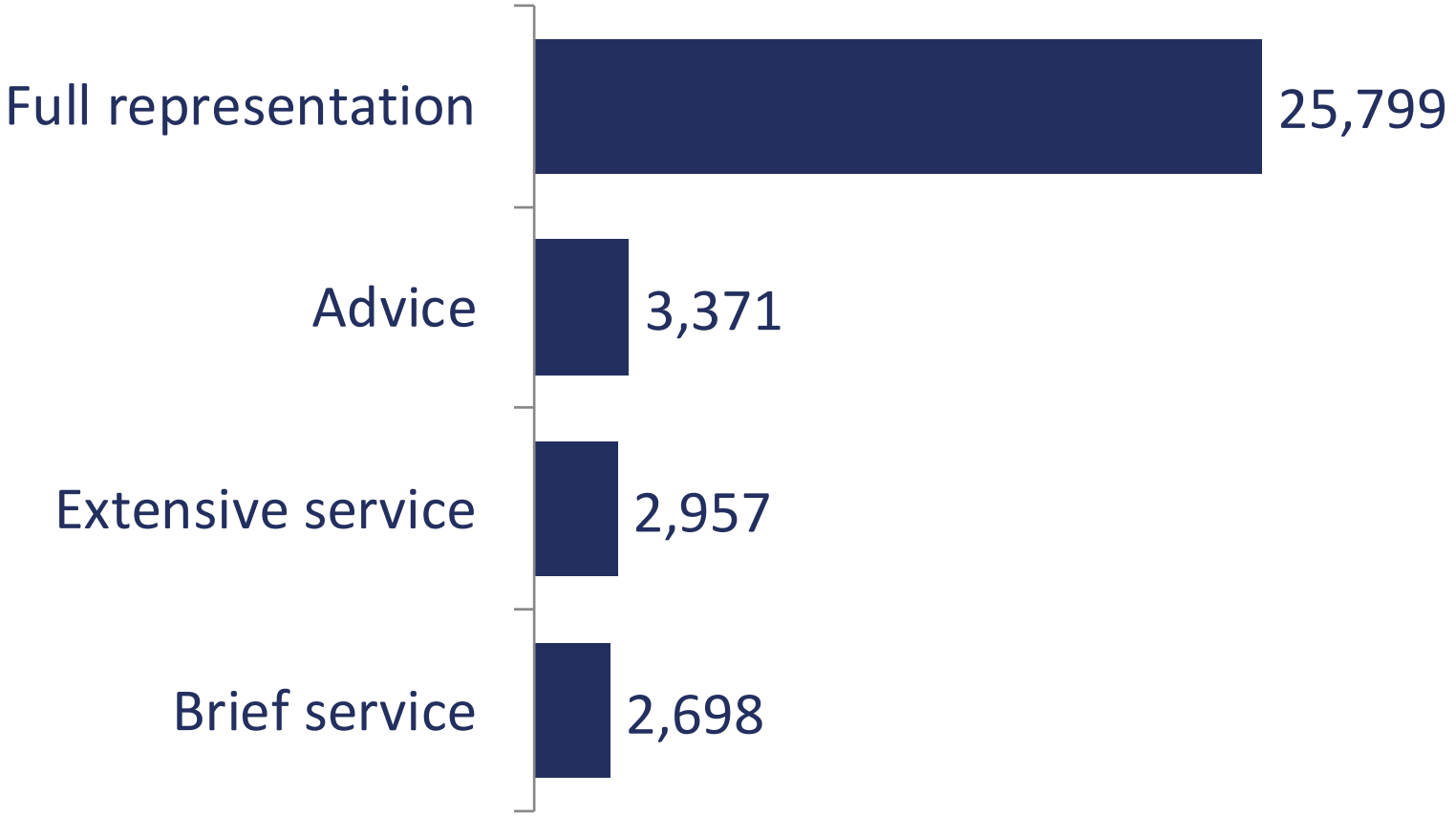
74%

of closed cases ended with no writ

What a writ means

A writ sends the sheriff to the door.

This is full representation, not a hotline



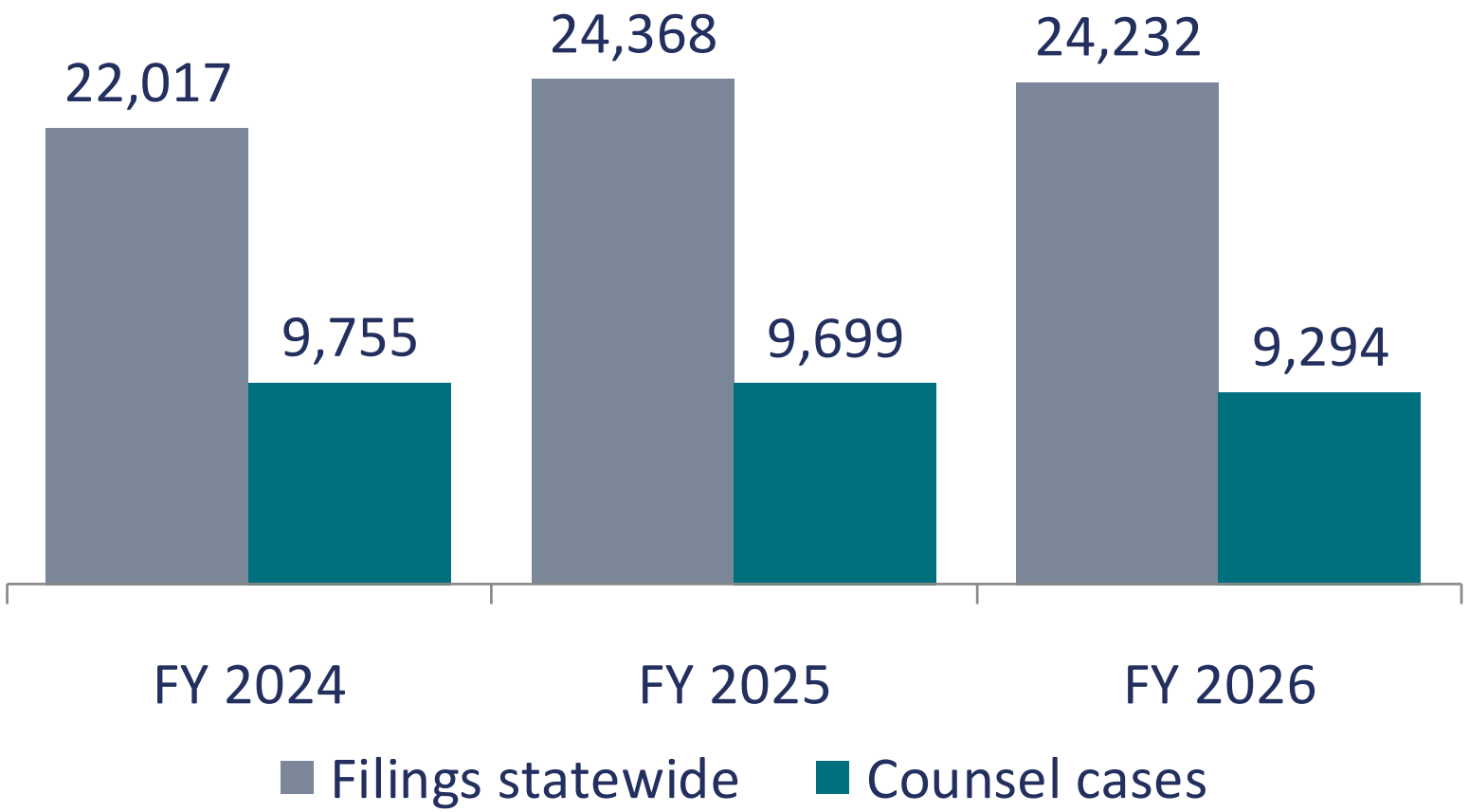
25,799

of 34,859 closed cases got full representation

What counsel puts on the table

- Rental assistance
- Negotiated agreements
- Saved rent subsidy
- Limited dissemination
- Repairs and conditions
- Extra days to move

Filings climbed. Capacity did not.



Flat for three years

Cases held at 9,300 to 9,800 a year

Filings rose by more than 2,200

Since January 2022

38,947
cases

82%
secured permanent housing

54%
remained in the home

47%
clients are BIPOC

40%
have a disability

Today, every eligible tenant gets an attorney.

$75,639,116

saved for low-income tenants

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Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

First Two Quarters, First in the Nation

What a new program is learning

Program Data: Demand and capacity

~32

New cases per month, funded

~ 170

eligible noticers per month, statewide

Written notice are one signal for demand; prioritized by vulnerability.

Program Data: Six months of access

167	Unique calls to the program
38	Full representation referrals
74	Intakes
19	Closed cases

Every dollar spent on boarding is a dollar lost to care.

Program Data: What Legal Representation Produced

10	Remained in place
7	Lawful and supported transfers
5 of 5	successful administrative-appeals
6	Non-payment resolutions

One thing to take away

Social safety nets are disappearing. Washington built a new one.

Counsel is now a structure, not luck, for low-income tenants and long-term care residents.

https://vimeo.com/862810732?fl=pl&fe=sh#end=6m



Q&A

Thank you!