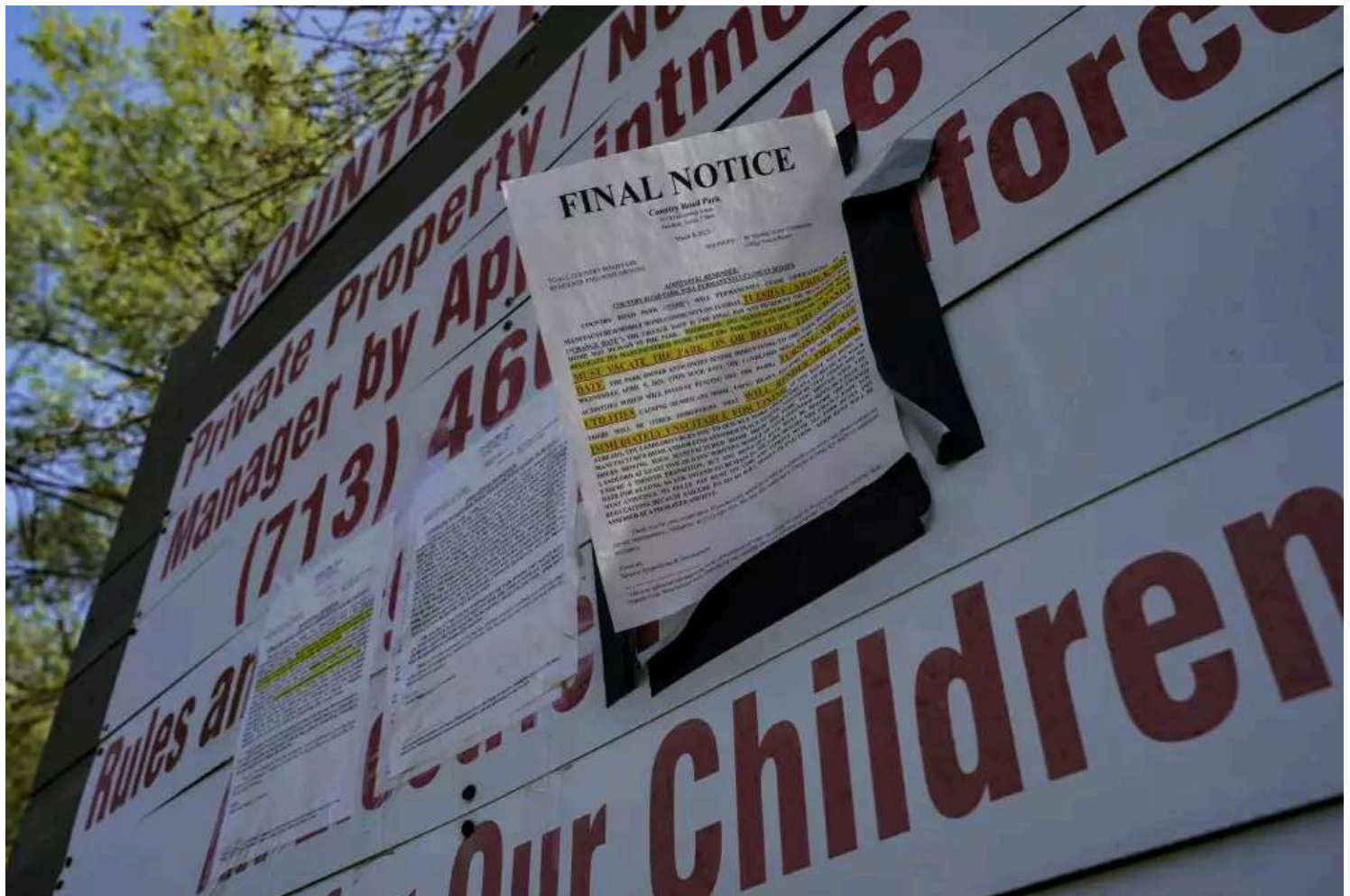


OPINION // OUTLOOK

Texas lawmakers want even faster evictions. It will cause hunger and sickness. | Opinion

By Amanda Pope, Jordan Pacelli Everett

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An eviction notice is posted at the entrance of northwest Harris County's Moorpark Village mobile home community on Friday, March 21, 2025 in Houston.

Raquel Natalicchio/Staff Photographer



Listen Now: Texas lawmakers want even faster evictions. It will cause hunger and sickne

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Houston — and Texas as a whole — faces the worst affordable housing crisis in generations, threatening a basic human need from becoming a reality for many. Housing costs outpace wages; many people are one unexpected expense — a missed shift, a busted transmission, an ER visit, or cancelled childcare — from being unable to pay rent. Current proposed legislation, House Bill 32 and its Senate companion, Senate Bill 38, would escalate this crisis by making evictions faster, easier and far more common.

At the Houston Food Bank and Prevention Institute, we know housing is foundational to all aspects of family and community stability and health. We envision a world where food banks do not exist because they are not needed anymore and where all people experience their full potential for health, safety and wellbeing.

HB 32 and SB 38 are being sold as a fix for “squatters,” people who trespass and reside in a home without a lease. In reality, the bills are Trojan horse policies that would dismantle protections for all renters in Texas. These bills would fast-track evictions, strip tenants of due process, weaken rules for how tenants are notified of an eviction and reduce opportunities for legal representation — leaving families vulnerable to homelessness, hunger and preventable health crises.

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Let's be clear: this is not about squatters. It's about making eviction even easier for landlords including the large, often out-of-state corporate landlords who already clog the system.

According to an analysis by Texas Housers, one in every 10 Harris County evictions are from just 30 properties, and over a third of the owners are based outside Texas. The process moves quickly. In Harris County, the median time from a landlord filing an eviction to a judge making a decision was under three weeks.

Hearings can, and often do, last less than 90 seconds.

HB 32 and SB 38 would make the process go even faster by allowing a judge to rule for a landlord if a tenant does not submit documents to the court within four days of receiving a notice from the landlord. This means people could lose their homes in 10 days — without ever setting foot in a courtroom, understanding their rights or having a chance to explain their situation.

That's not just unjust, it's a dangerous policy choice. Evictions are a major driver of food insecurity and a serious public health issue. Housing instability makes it harder to access or afford nutritious food, maintain medication routines or attend medical appointments. Parents who are evicted often skip meals and lose jobs, while children in unstable housing face higher rates of anxiety, poor nutrition, missed school and worse grades. Research shows evictions and forced moves are associated with worse health outcomes, including asthma, high blood pressure and premature births.

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And these harms aren't felt equally. Women, particularly Black and Latina mothers, experience a disproportionate number of evictions. Children make up nearly 40% of those facing eviction each year. Housing instability can lead to children being separated from their parents and placed in the foster care system. Survivors of domestic violence often face housing discrimination and unfair evictions, which leads directly to homelessness.

When evictions become an assembly line, instead of a last resort, it's the government and non-profit sectors — homeless shelters, emergency rooms and food banks — that absorb the cost. But they are not built to carry the weight of a housing crisis. For the Houston Food Bank, we are a frontline witness to the policies that push people to our lines.

Legal representation is one of our most effective tools to prevent unnecessary evictions. We know this because we help lead Keep Harris Housed — a coalition of local partners — that has worked to expand access to attorneys for families in Harris County eviction courts. More tenants are now able to receive a legal review or full representation at the courthouse on the day of their hearing.

HB 32 and SB 38 would undermine our progress. Although lawmakers removed harmful provisions — including one that would have eliminated the requirement to give tenants prior notice of eviction, and another that would have extensively limited tenants' access to legal representation — the broader damage remains. The bills still allow evictions without a hearing or trial and because of the expedited process, this limits opportunities for meaningful legal representation. That is the heart of the harm.

Without legal support, families are far less likely to stay housed, negotiate payment plans, understand court proceedings or report unsafe housing conditions.

Eviction has become both a consequence of poverty — and a force that deepens it. When it happens, it must be a last resort, carried out with fairness, notice and due process. When it isn't, we shouldn't be surprised when hunger rises and health outcomes worsen.

If we are committed to communities' health and addressing food security, we must start with housing stability. If we care about children, we must protect their futures.

HB 32 and SB 38 will negatively impact the physical, mental and economic health of our communities, deepen food insecurity, and deprive tenants of their rights. All lawmakers in the Texas Legislature represent tenants. We call on them, especially those representing Harris County, to say no to this harmful, dangerous legislation.

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