**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 27‑40‑680 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT A TENANT HAS THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN AN EVICTION PROCEEDING BETWEEN THE TENANT AND A LANDLORD AND TO AUTHORIZE THE COURT TO APPOINT COUNSEL TO DEFEND A TENANT IF IT DETERMINES THE TENANT IS UNABLE TO FINANCIALLY RETAIN ADEQUATE LEGAL COUNSEL.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Subarticle 1, Article 7, Chapter 40, Title 27 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 27‑40‑680. A tenant is entitled to legal counsel in an eviction proceeding rising from the termination or alleged noncompliance with a rental agreement with the landlord. If the magistrate or circuit court judge determines that the tenant is unable financially to retain adequate legal counsel, the court shall appoint qualified and experienced counsel to defend the tenant throughout the eviction proceeding. Such counsel must be paid fees and costs that the court deems appropriate.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑