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Ms. Jennifer Reed
Director, Office of Budget and Performance Management
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 513
Washington, D.C. 20004
sent via e-mail: jennifer.reed@dc.gov

RE: FY 2021 Access to Justice Initiative Funding

Dear Ms. Reed:

The District government plays a vital role in making the District a national leader in prioritizing civil justice for its most vulnerable residents. The D.C. Access to Justice Commission recently released [*Delivering Justice*](#), a report that celebrates the important work of District civil legal services organizations over the past ten years. Simply put, this work would not have been possible without the District government's investment through the Access to Justice Initiative. We are incredibly grateful for the Mayor's support.

At the same time, the Commission found that despite this support, the mounting legal needs of low-income District residents continue to outpace the resources civil legal services providers have available to meet them. Providers continue to turn away District residents seeking help in navigating family issues, accessing safe housing, saving a family home from foreclosure, receiving needed public benefits, combatting immigration concerns, addressing consumer rights, and more. *Delivering Justice* features local court data that demonstrate this great need through the thousands of litigants who visit the court's self-help centers each year seeking legal help and the staggeringly high rates of litigants appearing in court without a lawyer, as high as 97% in some legal areas.

This is an important moment for civil justice in the District. We must do more to meet the persistent civil legal needs of District residents. In 2020, the Commission will lead a community-wide effort to take the strategies identified in *Delivering Justice*, bring together other stakeholders, and chart a path forward for the future of civil access to justice in our city. The funds devoted to the Access to Justice Initiative in FY 2021 will play a critical role in allowing the community to build on its strong foundation, expand services in needed areas, and pursue new, progressive solutions to address our civil justice gap.

Greater resources are needed to accomplish this important work. You may know that Councilmember Allen, Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety, included funding the Access to Justice Initiative at \$19 million in his list of budget priorities sent to the Mayor. It is our hope that the District will significantly increase the Access to Justice Initiative in fiscal year 2021, as detailed in the attached summary. In doing so, the District will join a growing list of jurisdictions devoting public resources to advance civil justice. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the Commission's Executive Director, Nancy Drane.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter".

Peter B. Edelman, Chair

cc: Betsy Cavendish, General Counsel, Executive Office of the Mayor
Kevin Donahue, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice
Michelle Garcia, Director, D.C. Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
Kirra L. Jarratt, Chief Executive Officer, DC Bar Foundation

**FY 2021 Public Funding Request for Access to Justice Initiative:
Civil Legal Services and Poverty Lawyers**

SUMMARY:

When vulnerable and low-income D.C. residents face life-changing challenges such as wage theft, improper termination of benefits, family concerns, or potential eviction, the availability of civil legal services allows these individuals to seek fair treatment through legal solutions. The District government has long recognized low-income D.C. residents' critical need for legal assistance in civil legal matters and has provided vital financial support through the Access to Justice Initiative. The Access to Justice Initiative appropriation is used to increase legal services in communities and neighborhoods of highly concentrated poverty, expand representation in housing and other civil legal matters, fight wrongful evictions, maintain a legal interpreter bank, and keep experienced poverty lawyers working in our community. The DC Bar Foundation, working with the Office of Victim Services Justice Grants, has skillfully and strategically administered the Initiative since its inception.

The Access to Justice Initiative is a valuable public investment. Civil legal services make government systems more effective for residents and are part of the critical safety net for District residents living in poverty. It is hard to imagine attempting the daunting task of navigating the District's complex court system without a lawyer, particularly when the things most precious to you are at stake – your children, your home, your physical safety, your only income stream. With civil legal services, vulnerable D.C. residents have access to court-based and community-based legal services and are more likely to remain in their home, avoid being cheated out of wages for time worked, keep their benefits, and resolve family conflicts. When D.C. residents have greater access to justice, this means greater family stability and economic opportunity and a better overall quality of life in the community.

Despite the District's investment in the Access to Justice Initiative, the need for legal help among District residents persists. In its [*Delivering Justice*](#) reportⁱ, the D.C. Access to Justice Commission reported that the vast majority of litigants in our local courts and tribunals, in areas like eviction, family matters, public benefits, small estates, and unemployment compensation, proceed without a lawyer. (*See attached, "Rates of Representation and Self-Help Needs in D.C. Courts and D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings."*) For the thousands of D.C. residents who currently struggle to address these problems without access to legal representation, the continued growth of the District's public investment in the Access to Justice Initiative could mean the difference between getting help or going it alone.

The Access to Justice Initiative includes three programs: the Access to Justice Grants Program (ATJ) for all types of civil legal aid aimed at increasing services in communities and neighborhoods of highly concentrated poverty, expanding representation in housing matters, and maintaining a legal interpreter bank; the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP), providing representation in eviction proceedings; and the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program (DC LRAP) to assist lawyers with student loan debt. The DC Bar Foundation has thoughtfully administered and guided the development of each program from the beginning.

The D.C. Access to Justice Commissionⁱⁱ requests that the District build upon its commitment to equal justice for low-income D.C. residents by increasing the Access to Justice Initiative to \$19 million in fiscal year 2021. Increasing funding will allow the program's resources to keep pace with the District's growing need for civil legal services, accommodate the expansion of successful, existing programs, support the evaluation of services for impact and improvements, and help ensure that community feedback is considered and incorporated into program changes. Increased resources will also foster other progressive strategies to connect District residents with the vital legal help that they need through the expanded use of technology, the type of integrated community partnerships celebrated in *Delivering Justice*, and other approaches. The DC Bar Foundation is fully prepared to manage this increase and has already identified areas of need where increased funding would be directed.

FUNDING REQUEST:

We respectfully suggest the following breakdown:

Access to Justice Initiative - \$19,000,000 in recurring funds

- \$11,500,000 for the Access to Justice Grants Program. This is an increase of \$5,243,000 from FY20 funding. This increase will allow program grants to more closely meet the demand for current and new civil legal services, including the expansion of successful, existing programs; evaluate practices and assess community need in more detail; support the development of coordinated intake and other technological innovations and infrastructure to more efficiently deliver legal services; and pursue other strategies to better serve District residents.
- \$7,150,000 for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program. This is an increase of \$2,650,000 from FY20 funding – the first time funding would be increased since the program was created in FY18. This increase will provide for more eviction defense legal services to a higher volume of D.C. residents and will support practice improvements identified through an evaluation of the existing program.
- \$350,000 for the DC Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program. This is an increase of \$50,000 from FY20 funding. This reflects the anticipated recruitment and retention of additional legal aid lawyers.

SUCCESSSES OF THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE:

Increased funding will allow us to multiply the successful interventions already realized through the Access to Justice Initiative. Since the Access to Justice Initiative's inception, the District government's appropriation has been vital to ensuring that tens of thousands of low-income District residents have access to legal assistance that keeps families in their home, protects workers in the workplace, and supports vulnerable populations like seniors aging in place. These funds have transformed the legal services network by increasing the capacity and reach of District nonprofit legal services organizations and by addressing emerging needs throughout the District. The D.C. Access to Justice Commission recently released a report,

Delivering Justice, which documents the important work being done by the District's civil legal services community to address these needs – much of which would not have been possible without the Access to Justice Initiative. (See attached, "Executive Summary - Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia.") The DC Bar Foundation is committed to evaluating new and ongoing programs to ensure that the Access to Justice Initiative's funded programs and services continue to effectively and efficiently serve District residents and have the desired impact.

Below please find a summary of the work being done in the community through the Access to Justice Initiative. (See attached for a full list of FY20 grantees.)

Access to Justice Grants Program (ATJ):

Through the Access to Justice Grants Program, vulnerable District residents have a fairer shot at civil justice when they have access to legal assistance and representation. Examples of how these funds keep District families in their homes, protect consumers in the marketplace, and increase service access for vulnerable District residents like the elderly, children, and people with disabilities are described below.

Keeping District Families in Their Homes.

- **Preserving Affordable Housing.** These funds help low-income residents challenge unlawful rent increases, building conditions, and voucher terminations. The effect is the preservation of existing affordable housing stock.
- **Preventing Foreclosures.** These funds help low-income homeowners who are unfamiliar with the court process defend against foreclosures that are based on deed theft, mortgage fraud, equity stripping scams, or tax sales. Attorneys are present in court every week for the call of the judicial foreclosure calendar.
- **Safeguarding Low-Equity Housing Cooperatives.** These funds help tenant groups develop and maintain the administrative infrastructure, governance and regulatory compliance of tenant-owned limited equity cooperatives in order to prevent problems that cause these affordable housing cooperatives to convert to market rate housing.

Protecting District Consumers in the Marketplace and Workplace.

- **Stabilizing Credit for Low-Income Residents.** These funds help residents fight predatory lending and illegal debt collection schemes and avert negative court judgments and credit reports, which can affect housing and employment opportunities. Residents are also less likely to lose their driver's license or bank account and less likely to enter into payment plans that are impossible for them to meet.
- **Protecting Wages and Jobs.** These funds help teach low-income workers to their rights, ensure they receive the wages they have earned and help them recover stolen wages, and fight discrimination and harassment.

- **Modeling Language Access.** These funds help low-income limited English proficient and deaf residents access services from 40 nonprofit legal services providers. Residents are able to receive high quality interpretation and translation services for which demand is increasing - during the first six months of 2019, there were 95 requests for in-person interpreters to handle housing cases, compared to 42 requests for the same period in 2018. The three languages with the highest number of requests for interpretation services are Spanish, Amharic, and American Sign Language.

Increasing Service Access for the Most Vulnerable District Residents.

- **Keeping Families Healthy.** These funds support medical-legal partnerships that place lawyers alongside staff at some of the District's most high-volume providers of primary medical care. They help low-income D.C. residents apply for and pursue/maintain Social Security income, D.C. cash assistance, private disability benefits, and gain access to housing, food, and medications. They also find legal remedies for health problems, such as uncontrolled asthma due to mold-infested homes.
- **Assisting Seniors Aging in Place.** These funds support attorneys who visit the homes of D.C.'s homebound low-income seniors to draft wills and advance directives. These attorneys also review public benefits and help these seniors fight scams and deal with any housing-related issues.
- **Helping At-Risk Youth Stay in School.** These funds help court-involved youth and young adults in their fight to stay in school and access the educational supports they need to graduate high school and plan for a successful post-secondary lifepath.

Last year, ATJ grantees provided referrals and legal assistance to close to 30,000 low-income D.C. residents, handled close to 9,500 cases, placed more than 401 cases with pro bono lawyers, and conducted more than 425 community legal education sessions. These critical services continue to be outpaced by the growing need for free legal services in the District.

Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) :

With the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, low-income District residents can defend against eviction. The District investment in eviction defense recognizes that it is more cost effective to try to keep families in their home than for families to become homeless. The Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, which was launched in fiscal year 2018, supports six legal services providers that provide free eviction defense legal services to low-income tenants in the District. The funds increased the presence of free legal services at the courthouse to help address inequities in representation in eviction proceedings, where the vast majority of landlords benefit from legal representation. To determine how much of a difference the program is making in keeping families in their homes and to quantify the program's impact, in 2019 the DC Bar Foundation launched an outcomes-based evaluation of the program.

From preliminary evaluation findings, three of the most notable accomplishments include: (1) the creation of a multi-organization collaboration to share best practices; (2) the sharing of

resources across members of the network; and (3) with additional staff, expanded capacity for eviction defense in the District.

Over one two-month period, the grantees served 759 residents where 54% were from Wards 7 and 8, 68% identified as female, and 82% identified as Black or African American. During the two-month period, of 159 closed cases, 50% of the tenants maintained their housing. This is only a fraction of low-income D.C. residents at high risk of evictions. We must work towards all low-income D.C. residents faced with eviction having access to legal representation. Increased funding will support the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program towards this goal.

DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program:

The DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program (DC LRAP) is a critical tool for recruiting and maintaining a talented, passionate, and diverse corps of legal services lawyers. These poverty lawyers work at nonprofit legal services providers and have a salary range from \$45,000 to \$90,000, with an average debt of \$191,000. DC LRAP provides each eligible attorney a one-year, interest-free, forgivable loan, of up to \$12,000 per year. The District's LRAP continues to be one of the most generous publicly-funded LRAPs in the country. This year, it provided 46 attorneys living in the District with the opportunity to pay their monthly student loan debt, thereby supporting their commitment to provide free, high-quality legal assistance to the D.C. community.

CONCLUSION:

Poverty is complex and everyday challenges create a constant struggle for low-income D.C. residents to survive. The Access to Justice Initiative changes the lives of low-income and vulnerable District residents for the better: D.C. families can become more stable, renters have safer housing, workers receive their earned wages, seniors can age in place, and children get healthier. With eviction defense, more families remain in their homes, preventing or avoiding homelessness, a more cost effective approach for the entire community. This is a wise use of public funds and has improved the well-being of the District community as a whole. The District's support of the Access to Justice Initiative has helped countless residents secure the legal assistance they need to have a fair shot at meeting vital human needs and in doing so, helps make the District a more just, stable, and thriving community for all.

ⁱ D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Delivering Justice* (December 2019), available at www.dcccesstojustice.org.

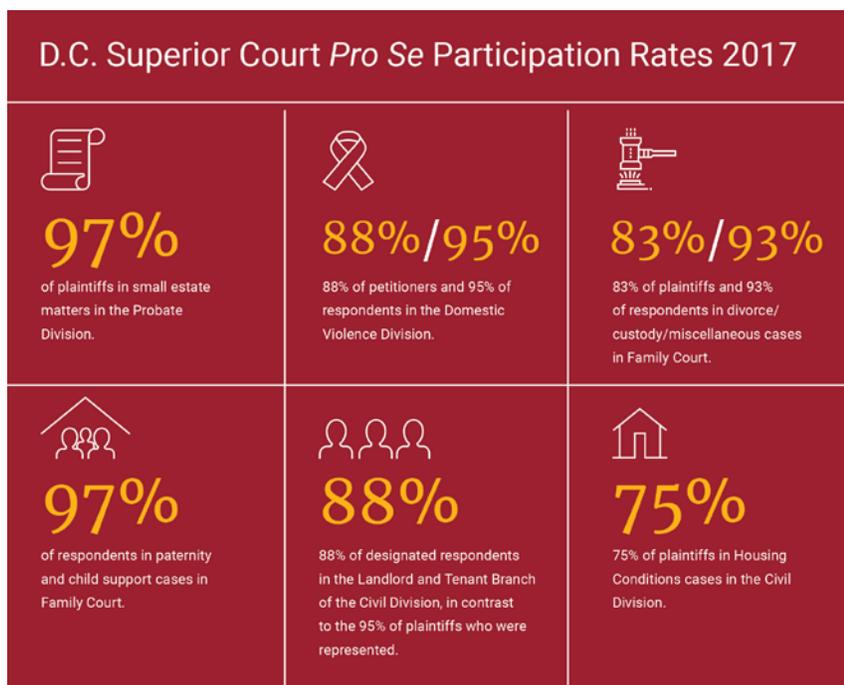
ⁱⁱ The D.C. Access to Justice Commission was created by the D.C. Court of Appeals in 2005 to address low- and moderate-income residents' unmet need for civil legal services. Commissioners include judges, past Presidents of the D.C. Bar, Executive Directors of leading legal services providers, and other community leaders. Please note that this request is being submitted on behalf of the non-judicial members of the Commission.

Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia

Rates of Representation and Self-Help Needs in D.C. Courts and the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings

Despite the fact that more low-income D.C. residents receive civil legal services now than ever before, a significant percentage still are unrepresented. This comes at a great cost, as unrepresented individuals are less likely to experience positive outcomes than those with legal assistance.

Though it is impossible to calculate the total number of low- and moderate-income District residents who face legal problems without the help of an attorney, court *pro se* rates provide an important insight into the scope of this problem. Depending on case type, *pro se* participation in 2017 ranged from 50%-90% in the D.C. Court of Appeals and from 75-97% in the D.C. Superior Court in certain civil justice areas (as shown below). Similarly, parties are unrepresented in the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings at comparably high rates. For example, no party was represented in 88% of student discipline appeals, 86% of appeals related to public benefits determinations, and 91% of disputes concerning unemployment compensation benefits. These high rates of unrepresented litigants in both D.C. Courts and the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings reflect the ongoing access to justice crisis in D.C.



The need for legal assistance is also reflected by the high volume of litigants who visit court-based resource centers. These self-help centers are located throughout the court system and are focused on particular areas of court practice. They offer same day assistance – though not full legal representation – to unrepresented customers who are navigating the court system without an attorney. They are managed and supervised either by the court or legal services providers, sometimes with the support of *pro bono* volunteers.

Customers, who typically are served regardless of income, may be referred to a legal services organization, or receive help completing court forms and pleadings. Customers often visit the centers more than once during the life of a case if they are unable to obtain counsel. As seen in the following data from 2018, the volume of activity at these crucial centers is significant.

- 8,601 – The number of individuals served at the Family Court Self-Help Center in areas like custody, visitation, divorce, and child support.*
- 4,116 – The number of individuals (3,445 tenants and 661 landlords) served at the Landlord Tenant Resource Center.*
- 659 – The number of individuals served at the Probate Resource Center (now the Probate Self-Help Center) .**
- 533 – The number of individuals served at the Small Claims Resource Center.**
- 406 – The number of individuals served at the Consumer Law Resource Center in areas like debt collection, contractor disputes, automotive repair disputes, utility disputes, and issues involving violations of the Consumer Protection Procedures Act.**

*These court-based services were offered Monday through Friday.

**These court-based services were offered only on limited days and times of the week.

Download full report at
www.dcccesstojustice.org





Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia

D.C. ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

Welcome Letter

On behalf of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission, I proudly present *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia*. This Report revisits the issues raised in the Commission's 2008 Report, *Justice for All? An Examination of the Civil Legal Needs of the District of Columbia's Low-Income Community*. Like the 2008 Report, *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia* examines the civil legal needs facing low- and moderate-income residents of the District and the capacity of the legal services network to meet those needs. This Report builds on the 2008 Report's findings by comparing the needs documented then with those present today. To provide background and context to these findings, the Report incorporates insights and comments from legal services providers and other stakeholders collected during multiple, issue-based listening sessions. As a result, *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia* illustrates both the evolution of needs in the District and how the provider network has evolved and adapted to meet those needs.

Much like the 2008 Report, *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia* shows the devastating impact of unmet civil legal needs on low- and moderate-income District residents. It serves as an update to the Commission's comprehensive 2008 Report and as a companion to the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers' publication, the *Community Listening Project (2016)*. Together, the voices of legal services providers and members of the client community provide important content and data about civil legal needs in the District. Despite the great strides described here – providers harnessing and sharing resources, innovating service delivery, increasing access to legal assistance, and strategically addressing clients' issues both systemically and through individual representation – the justice gap persists. The Report offers explanations for the persistent gap and suggestions for how to increase access to justice in the future.

The innovations and improvements to service delivery described in the Report would not have been possible

without the D.C. government's substantial infusion of resources. The Commission is extraordinarily grateful to Mayor Muriel Bowser, D.C. Council Chair Phil Mendelson, and members of the D.C. Council who have demonstrated great commitment to increasing access to justice. These strides also were made possible by the leadership and expertise of the D.C. Bar Foundation which supports the provider community through its expert management of grant funds and its capacity to foster creative approaches to the delivery of services. The Commission also recognizes the vital role that the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers and its members play in advancing access to justice initiatives. And finally, we recognize the role of the D.C. Courts in creating the Commission and working to make the justice system more accessible to all.

The Commission is grateful to its own staff, Executive Director Nancy Drane and Staff Attorney Kate Rabb, for researching and writing the Report, managing ongoing data collection and analysis, and collaborating with the many partners who assisted in this effort. The Commission also appreciates the contributions of its Commissioners and of Senior Advisor Jess Rosenbaum, who offered their time and expertise throughout this Project, and the D.C. Access to Justice Foundation's Board of Directors for its support of the Commission's work.

The Commission thanks legal services providers, law school faculty, community members, court personnel, the D.C. Bar Foundation, and other stakeholders who contributed to this Report. The Report would not have been possible without their detailed survey responses, data collection, written comments, and thoughtful feedback. We appreciate the time these partners dedicated to listening sessions during which they shared valuable information about the challenges facing community members, clients, and legal services providers, and the strategies developed to move forward. We also thank the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute which contributed data and research to help accurately illustrate the demographics of District residents and the daily issues that low- and moderate-income residents face. We are very

grateful to the D.C. Courts for their considerable efforts to gather relevant court data. Finally, we extend our gratitude to Friends of Legal Services Corporation, whose generous financial support made it possible to bring additional staffing to the Commission in order to complete this Report.

DLA Piper LLP has been an invaluable and true partner in this Project. We would especially like to thank Sara Moghadam, who managed the DLA Piper team, as well as the numerous partners, associates, summer associates, and support staff who, along with Sara, provided their time and talent. Their collective contributions were integral in completing this Report from its origins to publication. We also appreciate the leadership of DLA Piper's Pro Bono Partner, Lisa Dewey. Sara and Lisa were particularly valuable members of the team not only because of their contributions to this Report, but because they also were vital in researching and writing the 2008 Report. This background knowledge and continuity were critically important. We are incredibly grateful.

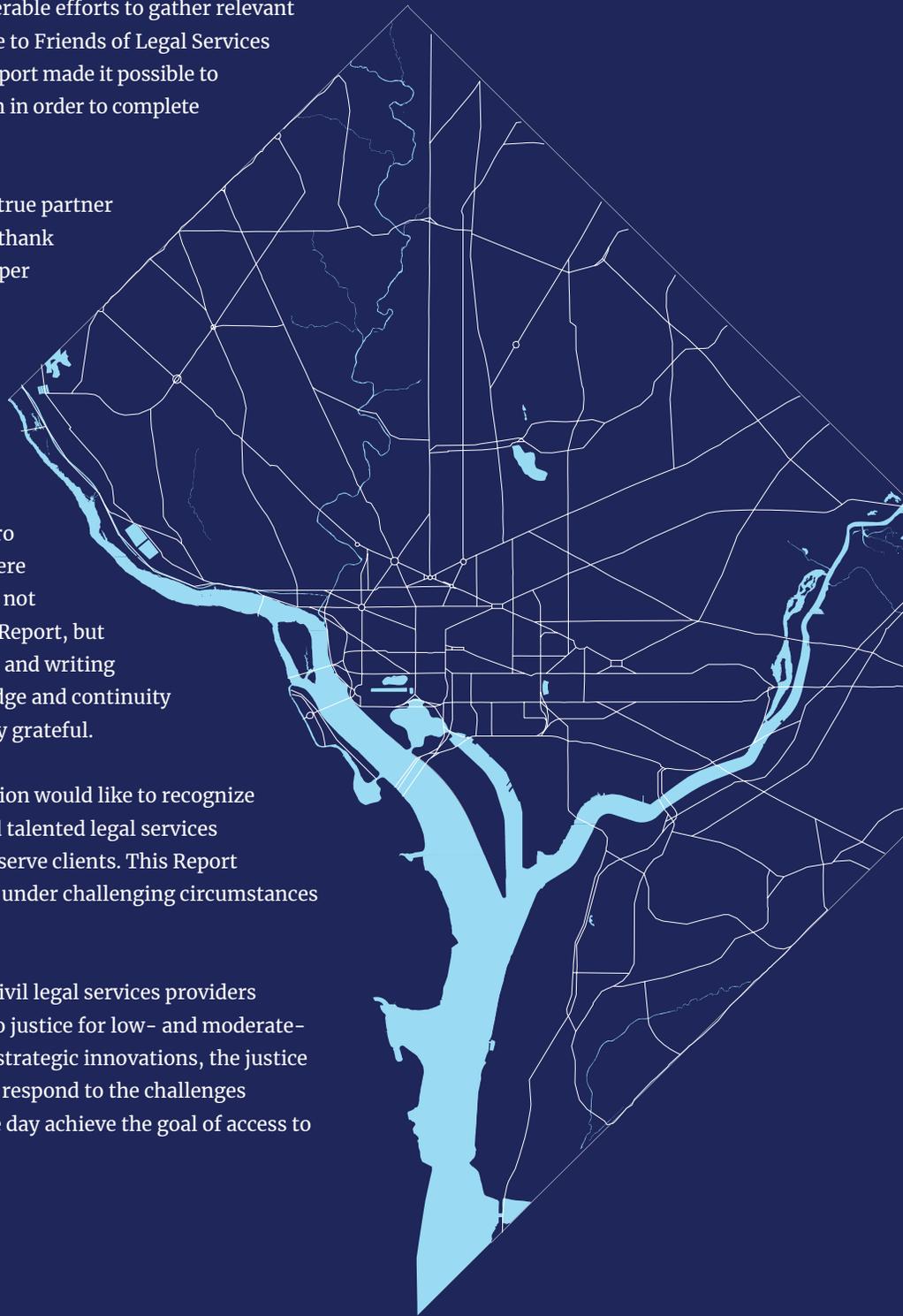
Finally, and most important, the Commission would like to recognize the work of the dedicated, resourceful, and talented legal services attorneys and staff who work every day to serve clients. This Report represents the extraordinary work they do under challenging circumstances to help District residents in need.

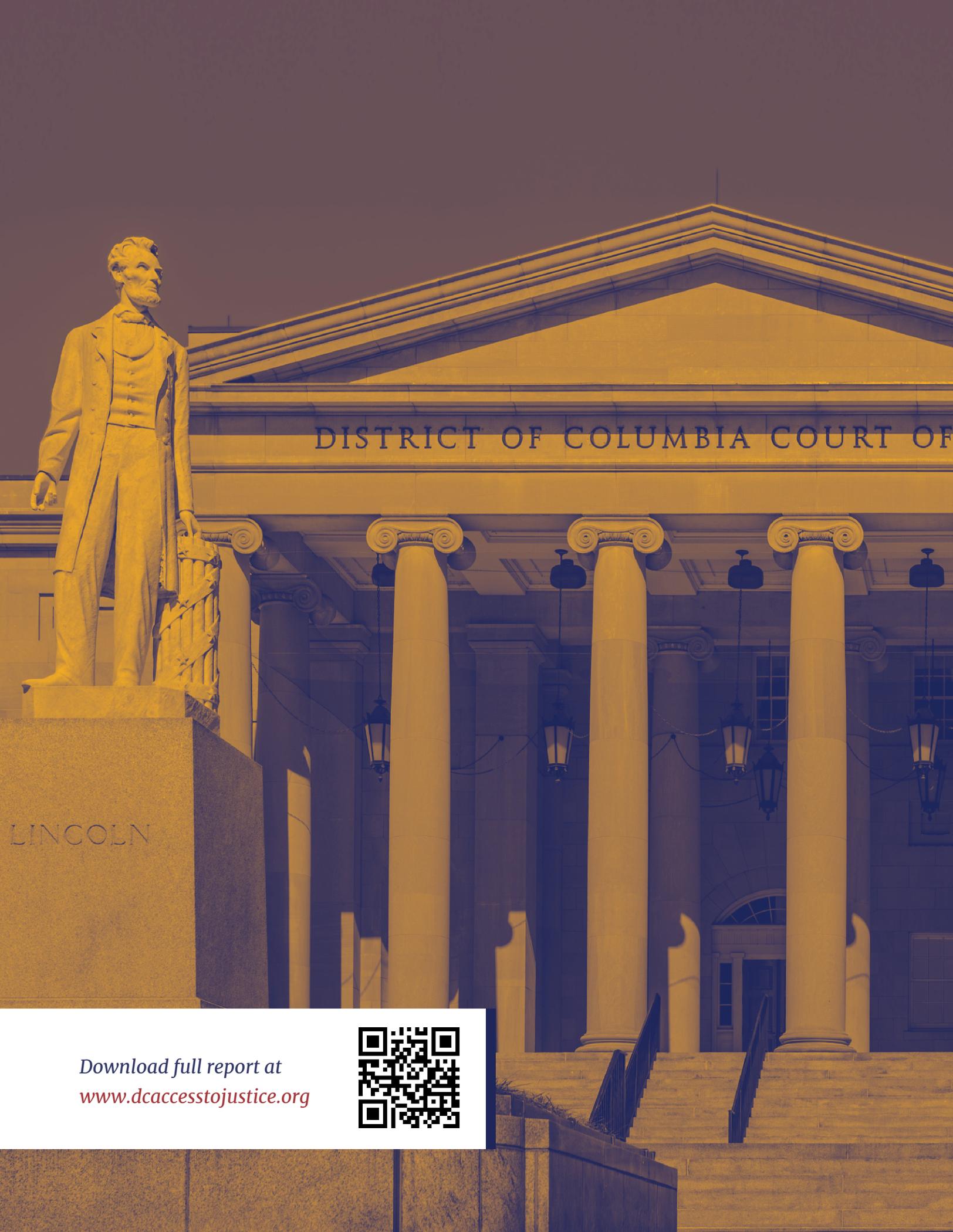
Since the publication of the 2008 Report, civil legal services providers have worked tirelessly to increase access to justice for low- and moderate-income District residents. Even with their strategic innovations, the justice gap persists. We hope that you will help us respond to the challenges identified in this Report so that we can one day achieve the goal of access to justice for all.

Sincerely,



Peter B. Edelman
Chair, D.C. Access to Justice Commission
2019





DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT OF

LINCOLN

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Executive Summary

This Report documents the evolution of civil legal needs and services in the District over the past 10 years. It examines the developments that have occurred since publication of *Justice for All? An Examination of the Civil Legal Needs of the District of Columbia's Low-Income Community*, the D.C. Access to Justice Commission's 2008 Report. The Commission explores this evolution through both quantitative and qualitative data provided by legal services organizations and other stakeholders. With analysis of survey data and of anecdotal evidence gained in numerous listening sessions, the Report illustrates changes in the legal services community as providers have innovated to accommodate emerging needs, available resources, and developing priorities. The Report also details frameworks that are increasingly driving providers' work, such as a racial justice orientation, community engagement, and systemic change.

Like the 2008 Report, this Report begins with a discussion of the District's low- and moderate-income populations, including their demographics and the problems they face. Despite dramatic changes in the economy over the past 10 years, poverty post-recession remains largely the same as it was pre-recession. Nearly 1 in 6 D.C. residents, about 111,000 individuals, live below the Federal poverty line; 32,000 of these residents are children – 26% of D.C. children live in poverty.¹ Even though providers have significantly increased their reach and the volume of clients served, this unrelenting poverty perpetuates the need for civil legal services.

In addition to being widespread, poverty in the District is concentrated in certain areas and among certain populations. Wards 7 and 8 have the highest poverty rates in the City, at 26.5% and 35.7%, respectively, compared to 17.4% Citywide.² Given the high level of unemployment and limited job opportunities for unskilled workers, it is difficult for residents to escape poverty. The District's adjusted unemployment rate in January 2019 was 5.4%.³ (By way of context, the District's rate consistently tracks higher than all other states except Alaska.⁴) Consistent with the concentration of poverty in the District, the unemployment

It is no surprise that the District faces an access to justice crisis given its high rate of poverty.

rate varies by Ward, with the highest levels in Wards 7 and 8. In January 2019, for example, the unemployment rate was 4.1% in Ward 3 as compared to 12.7% in Ward 8.⁵

The burden of this poverty and unemployment disproportionately affects African American residents. Residents of the Wards with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment have predominantly African American populations. (For example, 2017 Census data reported that in Ward 7, 92% of the population is African American, and in Ward 8, 90%.⁶) Furthermore, across the City, African American residents are almost eight times more likely than whites to be unemployed, according to a 2017 report.⁷ Recognizing the effects of both race and poverty on access

to justice, providers have become increasingly focused on racial justice as a guiding principle of their work. Many also have emphasized the importance of engaging community members and clients so that their lived experiences and understanding of needs help define the priorities of legal providers and the solutions they seek.

It is no surprise that the District faces an access to justice crisis given its high rate of poverty. Poverty increases the likelihood of experiencing civil legal problems and makes it more difficult to address them and recover from negative outcomes.⁸ And there are many other District residents who live just above poverty levels for whom access to justice is still out of reach. Living at or near poverty itself creates both a need for and impediment to accessing justice, but it is not the only circumstance that is associated with such challenges. As described in the Report, many of the District's low- and moderate-income residents face additional obstacles to navigating the civil legal system. Those residents include people with disabilities, those who need translation services due to being limited English proficient, Deaf or hard of hearing, the elderly, individuals who are illiterate or low-literate, the homeless, prisoners or ex-offenders, transgender and gender expansive people, veterans, and survivors of sexual assault.

Despite these barriers, the number of D.C. legal services attorneys available and the number of low-income residents served have grown substantially since the time of the 2008 Report. The increase in the number of people served is due in part to strategies and innovations that providers have implemented over the past 10 years, including: advocating for additional funding; increasing the number of full-time equivalent attorneys and other staff; and shifting the scope of their work and methods of providing assistance, including limited services. For those District residents who have access to full representation, this is crucially important, as low-income individuals with counsel experience better outcomes in legal matters than their unrepresented counterparts.⁹

Wherever possible, the Report illustrates these changes by comparing data included in the 2008 and current Reports and in an intervening Commission publication titled *Rationing Justice: The Effect of the Recession on Access to Justice in the District of Columbia*.¹⁰ In this way, readers can understand dramatic changes in the provider network in

According to the Legal Services Corporation, 71% of all low-income households nationally experienced at least one civil legal need over the past year and for most people affected, at least one of those legal problems had a severe impact on their lives.

light of financial pressures and increasing poverty during the recession. As these data show, providers were able to emerge from the recession into a period of relative strength marked by new approaches to closing the justice gap.

While data are crucially important for understanding access to justice in the District, it is essential to view those data in context. During multiple listening sessions, the Commission spoke with more than 100 practitioners, community members, and other stakeholders (e.g., court personnel, community organization staff) who interact with low- and moderate-income individuals in need of civil legal services. These sessions were with diverse groups of people who hold various roles and are involved in different aspects of legal practice, the justice system, and beyond – but there still emerged a unified and strongly held commitment to closing the justice gap and using legal services as an anti-poverty tool.

Though the high level of persistent poverty in D.C. makes it impossible to represent everyone in need of legal assistance, providers have made changes particularly to methods of service provision and organizational structure that have increased their capacity to serve low- and moderate-income residents. Those adaptations impact the provider community as a whole and also the individual practice areas covered in detail in this Report: Consumer; Disability and Health; Education; Employment; Estate Planning and Probate; Family and Domestic Violence; Housing; Immigration; Public Benefits; and Small Business and Nonprofit. This Report describes some critical ways in which the provider

community has evolved over the past 10 years and analyzes those changes both across the network as a whole and as manifested in the above listed areas of practice. These pivotal changes include:

- **The expansion of existing practice areas and the creation of new organizations and projects** in order to address unmet, persistent, and newly emerging needs. These changes were made possible by significant increases in the number of legal services attorneys in the District allowing providers to address the legal needs of substantially more low- and moderate-income residents.
- **The emergence of diverse and creative practice models** to address the barriers that clients experience in seeking assistance. These changes include increasing accessibility by making legal services available to clients in neighborhood offices, and through such programs as court-based legal services, resource centers, medical-legal partnerships, and community clinics. Providers also have increased access through use of limited scope representation, brief services, innovative intake models, robust translation services, and technology.
- **The development of collaborations** with an expansive range of partners including other providers, community-based organizations, the D.C. Courts, and medical institutions. Some also have prioritized collaboration with clients on a variety of initiatives to ensure that community members help shape providers' priorities and potential solutions.
- **The expansion of resources dedicated to systemic advocacy**, including increased focus on policy advocacy, regulatory and legislative projects, and appellate work. These activities complement individual client representation and allow providers to address larger systemic issues.
- **The adoption of key operational changes** in staffing that are crucial to the network's sustainability and growth. Providers have shifted resources to hire more non-legal staff in areas like development, social work, and community organizing, for example, and focusing on the importance of training on many issues including trauma-informed practice.

Though providers have largely taken the lead on development and implementation, these innovations would not have been possible without the support and leadership of many important partners. As discussed in the Report, providers could not have innovated their models and increased their capacity without generous funding from public and private sources. They could not have reached so many more clients without the help of private and government *pro bono* attorneys who donate their time and expertise to helping those in need of legal assistance. Providers also depended on their partnerships with the D.C. Courts to help increase access to justice for unrepresented litigants through advances such as on-site attorneys, modifications to court policies and procedures, and accessibility-promoting technology. The Report highlights the critical contributions of these many partners including: the Mayor and District Agencies; the D.C. Council; the D.C. Courts; the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings; the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers; D.C. area law schools; the D.C. Bar; private law firms; the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center and *pro bono* attorneys (particularly those from private practice and the government); the D.C. Bar Foundation; and community-based organizations and providers.



As the data make clear, the legal services network has implemented changes in practice over the past 10 years to substantially increase the number of clients it serves. Yet the justice crisis remains. According to the Legal Services Corporation, 71% of all low-income households nationally experienced at least one civil legal need over the past year and for most people affected, at least one of those legal problems had a severe impact on their lives.¹¹ Large numbers of low- and moderate-income residents, however, do not receive critical legal services to help resolve these problems and mitigate the severe impacts they cause. Though it is difficult to quantify exactly how many District residents continue to navigate the courts without counsel, there are data that suggest far too many litigants remain unrepresented. In 2017, the D.C. Court of Appeals saw *pro se* participation at the time of filing ranging from 50% to 90% depending on case type.¹² In D.C. Superior Court, of cases disposed in 2017 there were high *pro se* participation rates (*see below*).

The D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings sees comparably high percentages of cases with no party represented in student discipline appeals (88%), appeals related to public benefits determinations (86%), and disputes concerning unemployment compensation benefits (91%).¹⁵

This imbalance is likely due to a variety of factors. Attitudes about the legal system and the types of life barriers discussed above lead many District residents to deal with their problems by themselves or with the help of friends or community organizations rather than by reaching out to lawyers. Among the participants of the Consortium’s *Community Listening Project*, for example, only 11.32% of its survey participants (66 people out of 590) sought legal help for a problem.¹⁶ (Nationally, low-income Americans seek legal help for only 20% of their civil legal problems.¹⁷) Those who do reach out to lawyers often find a limited number of attorneys who are available to help low- and moderate-

D.C. Superior Court *Pro Se* Participation Rates 2017



97%

of plaintiffs in small estate matters in the Probate Division.



88%/95%

88% of petitioners and 95% of respondents in the Domestic Violence Division.



83%/93%

83% of plaintiffs and 93% of respondents in divorce/custody/miscellaneous cases in Family Court.



97%

of respondents in paternity and child support cases in Family Court.



88%

88% of designated respondents¹³ in the Landlord and Tenant Branch of the Civil Division, in contrast to the 95% of plaintiffs who were represented.



75%

75% of plaintiffs in Housing Conditions cases in the Civil Division.¹⁴

income District residents. Among *Community Listening Project* participants, for example, only 59.6% of those who sought legal assistance reported receiving it.

These circumstances make clear the need to increase the capacity of providers so that they can serve more low- and moderate-income residents who seek legal assistance and conduct outreach to those who do not. Increasing public and private funding for legal services programs continues to be imperative, as is expanding the legal profession's *pro bono* commitment. Approaches such as increasing reduced fee and limited scope arrangements for those who do not qualify for free legal aid but cannot afford rates lawyers normally charge, or identifying alternatives to formal litigation, consistent with due process, to those matters that can be better handled in a non-adversarial fashion, will also expand access to justice.

Even with significant expansion of capacity, though, it is unlikely that the justice gap will ever fully close in D.C. given its concentration of poverty. As a result, it is necessary to continue reforming courts, agencies, and public systems so that they are more accessible and easily navigable for clients who either are unrepresented or who have only minimal contact with attorneys. Providers are looking ahead to the next 10 years with the same resolve as they had in the past to develop and implement new strategies to promote justice for their clients. Providers seek to pinpoint the obstacles they face to increasing access and strategies for overcoming them. Some strategies providers identified for closing the justice gap include:



Educating low- and moderate-income residents about the legal system. Many District residents do not realize that the problems they face are legal in nature and can be addressed through the civil justice

system. If residents do not see the legal system as a potential solution to their problems, they will not solicit legal help. Many providers would like to focus in the future on public education that would allow low- and moderate-income residents either to address their own problems or to seek legal assistance. Critical to these public education efforts will be ensuring that non-legal professionals who interact with the District's low- and moderate-income population receive comparable training on the legal system.



Facilitating initial contacts with providers to improve the process of connecting residents with critical civil legal services.

Low- and moderate-income District residents often cannot be served by one or more of the providers they contact. They can find themselves undergoing multiple intake processes in various locations before securing assistance. This creates a disincentive for seeking legal assistance. Providers in certain practice areas in D.C. and in other jurisdictions have improved the experience of intake and referral through coordination among organizations and use of technology. District providers stressed the importance of streamlining the process of connecting residents with legal services.



Developing and strengthening community relationships. As is made clear by

providers' efforts over the last 10 years to increase the scope and reach of legal services, legal services organizations are constantly innovating and identifying new ways to improve access to justice. Many providers have found that their goals, whether related to individual representation or systemic reform, are facilitated by community connections. Those connections range from informal information gathering to formal, institutional partnerships. Many providers agree that collaborations with community members and organizations, whatever form they take, strengthen the work of civil legal services organizations and make them more receptive and responsive to clients' needs. It is a goal of many organizations in the network to increase access to justice by strengthening community engagement efforts.



Increasing the range of available civil legal services. Legal services providers have

significantly increased access to justice over the past 10 years in part by increasing the types of services they offer. The growing availability of limited scope representation and brief services provided in a variety of settings including community-based offices, the courthouse, and local organizations, has helped reach more residents in need of assistance. Many providers would like to continue expanding the range of delivery methods. In addition, providers voiced interest in exploring ways that trained professionals who are not attorneys can serve District residents who need help navigating the justice system.



Creating and implementing technological advances to make the delivery of legal services more efficient and to increase access to justice. Technology can be used to increase the accessibility of legal services.

Advancements such as interactive forms and computer-based guided legal assistance, for example, allow more low- and moderate-income individuals to receive help than might be possible through only traditional legal representation. Many in the legal services network emphasize the need to continue developing technologies that provide residents the tools to address legal problems.



Generating tools and resources for measuring need and evaluating impact.

Legal services providers who were interviewed for the Report uniformly expressed the importance of data collection

and analysis. Data collection allows organizations to assess the need for interventions and resource allocation and to measure the impact of their work. This is important not only for guiding providers' decision-making on priorities, strategies, and programs, but also for securing and sustaining funding. Though many providers recognize the benefit of data analysis and program evaluation, few have adequate resources necessary for conducting such work. Providers emphasize the need to develop these capabilities and to secure financial support so that work in the future can be informed and driven by data.



Expanding systemic work. Over the past 10 years, legal services providers have dedicated more resources to systemic advocacy. This has allowed providers not only to serve individual clients, but also

to address the conditions and circumstances that underlie their clients' legal needs. Through appellate and multi-party litigation and policy advocacy, providers address both the proximate causes of legal issues, such as housing conditions, and the structural, such as racial injustice. Many providers urge a continued focus on systemic work, some exploring how legal services attorneys can together take on even broader systemic issues such as poverty.

The Report shows the incredible strides legal services providers have made over the past 10 years in increasing access to justice for low- and moderate-income District residents. With the support and partnership of the D.C. government, the D.C. Bar Foundation, area law firms, private funders and charitable organizations, *pro bono* attorneys, and other stakeholders, providers have greatly increased their capacity and the number of clients they serve. Despite these tremendous gains, however, there remains a vast scope of unmet civil legal needs. Although there is a complex web of social, political, and economic factors driving this need, it still is possible to create a system where more low- and moderate-income people have access to the justice they seek. The Commission is dedicated to achieving this goal. Together with key stakeholders, the Commission is committed to developing recommendations and strategies based on the findings in this Report so that every resident of the District someday will have access to justice.

It is necessary to continue reforming courts, agencies, and public systems so that they are more accessible and easily navigable for clients who either are unrepresented or who have only minimal contact with attorneys.

Conclusion: The Commission's Commitment

This Report has shown great advances in the community's efforts to address the legal needs of District residents, but also the work that still must be done to increase access to justice in the future. The community must ensure that individual District residents have equal access to the justice system regardless of income while also continuing to shine a light on the systemic forces and barriers that create or exacerbate civil legal needs such as poverty, racial and economic injustice, and social isolation. Lawyers cannot solve these problems alone, but must be part of broader efforts to identify solutions to make the District a better place for low- and moderate-income District residents.

In the next 12 months, the Commission will commit to taking the lessons of this Report and developing an implementation plan to move them towards action. The Commission will engage with the larger District community in this effort, identifying ways that we can all work together to strengthen access to justice in the District and make the legal system more accessible to all low- and moderate-income District residents. With that in hand, the Commission is confident that the decade to come will be as impactful as the one that came before.



Endnotes

1 D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, *D.C. Must Do More to Do to Ensure Residents of Color Benefit from the District's Growing Prosperity, Census Data Show* (September 13, 2018); see also The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center, *Children in poverty (100 percent poverty) in District of Columbia*, (2008-2017).

2 United States Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, *Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months*, Table S1701.

3 D.C. Department of Employment Services, *Washington D.C. Economic Insights* (accessed July 16, 2019).

4 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Unemployment Rates for States, Seasonally Adjusted* (May 2019) (accessed July 16, 2019).

5 See *supra* note 3.

6 Census Reporter, *Profiles of D.C. Ward 7 and Ward 8* (accessed July 16, 2019).

7 Janelle Jones, *African American and Hispanic Unemployment Rates are Higher than White Unemployment Rates in Every State at the End of 2017*, (February 20, 2018), Economic Policy Institute.

8 Patricia E. Roberts, *From the War on Poverty to Pro Bono: Access to Justice Remains Elusive for Too Many, Including Our Veterans*, 34 B.C.J.L. & Soc. Just. 341 (2014), at 342; see also Faith Mullen, J.D., and Enrique Pumar, Ph.D., D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers, *The Community Listening Project*, (April 2016); Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans* (June 2017), at 25-26.

9 Rebecca L. Sandefur, *Elements of Professional Expertise: Understanding Relational and Substantive Expertise through Lawyers' Impact* (2015), *American Sociological Review* (finding that a synthesis of available evidence reveals that expanding access to attorneys could radically change the outcomes of adjudicated civil cases, stating "[t]his potential impact is notable when lawyers' work is compared to that of non-lawyer advocates... and spectacular when compared to lay people's attempts at self-representation.")

10 D.C. Access to Justice Commission and D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers, *Rationing Justice: the Effect of the Recession on Access to Justice in the District of Columbia* (November 2009).

11 Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans* (June 2017), at 21.

12 D.C. Courts *Pro Se* Data appears in *Appendix I*.

13 *Id.* Designated respondents are respondents who are identified in the relevant data field as either represented by an attorney or *pro se*. For the Civil Division, the court presented *pro se* data for designated respondents only, and thus the percentages should be considered an estimate. There are a large number of cases where the data field is blank as to whether a defendant is represented or *pro se*. Some of these undesignated respondents may not have ever appeared in court, or may be involved in cases that were disposed either before a respondent appears (i.e., dismissal by the plaintiff or the court) or because the respondent failed to appear (e.g., default judgment). Some may also be due to data error.

14 See *supra* note 12

15 D.C. Office of Administrative Hearing *Pro Se* Data appears in *Appendix J*.

16 Faith Mullen, J.D., and Enrique Pumar, Ph.D., D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers, *The Community Listening Project* (April 2016), at 30.

17 See *supra* note 11, at 7.

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DC Bar Foundation 2020 Grantees

Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program

The Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program funds are awarded exclusively to DC legal aid organizations that are providing legal representation DC tenants with low incomes who are facing eviction proceedings in landlord-tenant court in Washington, DC.

1. Creating Partnerships & Leveraging Resources to Prevent Eviction-\$400,000

Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) accepts referrals from the court-based eviction defense projects and conducts intake near the sites of properties that have building-wide evictions. NLSP has extensive community-based experience in providing housing-related legal assistance DC residents with low incomes, which will enhance the impact of court-based eviction defense projects.

2. Eviction Defense Practice-\$400,000

The DC Bar Pro Bono Center uses full-time attorneys for its Landlord-Tenant Resource Center, which serves as one of the main entry points for many DC residents with low incomes who are facing eviction. The DC Bar Pro Bono Center has assisted DC residents in eviction defense cases at the Landlord-Tenant Court since 2008 through its Landlord-Tenant Resource Center, supplemented by rotating volunteer attorneys.

3. Eviction Prevention Initiative-\$1,066,000

Rising for Justice (RFJ) places several housing attorneys in DC Superior Court to provide tenants with low incomes with free-same day representation in eviction cases. These attorneys also formally collaborate with Neighborhood Legal Services Program on a referral-basis, as well as other court-based providers. RFJ continues to leverage their impact by using law students to conduct outreach to DC residents with low incomes who are facing eviction and to assist with eviction cases.

4. Housing Preservation Project-\$650,000

Bread for the City provides same-day representation to DC residents with low incomes who are facing eviction at DC Superior Court's Landlord-Tenant Court. The attorneys also conduct outreach to tenants living in subsidized housing and facing eviction. The project is part of the court-based eviction defense

collaboration with Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, Rising for Justice, and DC Bar Pro Bono Center.

5. Housing Preservation Project-\$1,095,000

The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia provides Attorneys of the Day at the courthouse for eviction defense, as part of the court-based eviction defense collaboration with Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Bread for the City, Rising for Justice, and DC Bar Pro Bono Center. Attorneys focus on tenants living in subsidized housing and facing eviction in order to preserve the few subsidies that remain in DC.

6. Housing Preservation Project-\$475,000

Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) assists elderly residents (60+) with low incomes in eviction defense cases at the Landlord-Tenant Court. The project's attorneys are based at the courthouse and work in collaboration with the other court-based eviction defense projects. LCE also conducts pre-court outreach to tenants living in subsidized housing and facing eviction.

Access to Justice Grants Program

The Access to Justice Grants Program funds projects in three categories: (a) a shared legal services interpreter bank; (b) underserved areas; and (c) housing-related matters.

Civil Issues in Criminal Matters - \$404,000

1. Civil Protection Order (CPO) Project-\$40,000

Rising for Justice represents individuals facing a civil protection order and related family law matters to increase perceptions of fairness and provide a voice to this population. Attorneys provide same-day advice, mediation support, and representation to respondents.

2. DC Focus Project-\$40,000

The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project's DC Focus Project investigates and litigates cases of DC prisoners who have been convicted of a crime that they may not have committed. In comparison to other states, DC prisoners lack two of the traditional remedies for innocent prisoners: ineffective assistance of counsel claims at post-conviction and access to federal habeas review.

3. DC Jail and Prison Advocacy Project-\$150,000

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (ULS) serves as DC's federally mandated protection and advocacy organization charged with working for the rights of people with disabilities. ULS attorneys provide legal aid and direct advocacy for inmates with mental health disabilities in the DC Jail and other DC correctional facilities. Their attorneys work closely with the DC Department of Corrections, the DC Department of Mental Health, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons on behalf of DC prisoners.

4. Expungement Clinic-\$89,000

Through the Expungement Clinic, Rising for Justice provides legal assistance to District residents with low incomes who have a criminal arrest, charge, or conviction that they wish to seal. Even if they were never charged for or convicted of a crime, individuals may have a criminal record, making it more difficult to secure a job or housing, pursue education, and receive public assistance. The Expungement Clinic's attorneys work closely with eligible District residents with low incomes to seal their record and increase their chance at securing the basic components of a prosperous life.

5. Homeless Legal Connect-\$40,000

Christian Legal Aid of the District of Columbia staffs and manages its monthly intake center based at Central Union Mission, a men's homeless shelter and social service agency located in Ward 6. Staff attorneys and volunteer attorneys staff the clinic, providing legal assistance in various matters such as housing, public benefits, expungements, estate planning, and family law. About 50 percent of the clinic's clients are homeless, while the remainder are residents with low incomes from Wards 6, 7, and 8.

6. No Wrong Door to Justice-\$45,000

The Network for Victim Recovery of DC focuses on empowering victims to achieve survivor defined justice, by addressing their holistic needs (including social, medical and mental health services) through a collaborative approach encompassing advocacy, case management and legal services. Funding supports the Victim Legal Network of DC's expansion to reach more clients by adding a new bilingual attorney to serve as an entry point for crime victims seeking legal assistance.

Consumer Law - \$649,000

7. Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project-\$70,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia provides access to same-day representation in debt collection cases in an effort to protect the limited income and assets of DC residents with low incomes. The project places legal aid attorneys at DC Superior Court to serve pro se litigants with low incomes in debt collection matters before the Small Claims Court and the civil collections calendar.

8. Polk Street NE Office-\$344,000

Neighborhood Legal Services Program's (NLSP) office located in the Northeast neighborhood of Deanwood provides neighborhood-based legal aid in the areas of housing, family law, and public benefits. Staff attorneys are physically located at NLSP's office on Polk Street NE to provide residents with low incomes of this underserved community with free and accessible legal assistance.

9. Direct Legal Services in Debt Cases-\$150,000

Tzedek DC assists DC residents with low incomes in debt-related legal matters. Tzedek DC helps residents avoid the effects of a negative court judgment and bad credit report, such as losing their driver's license, seizure of their bank account, impossible payment plans, and the inability to obtain employment. Tzedek DC also conducts community outreach by partnering with the United Planning Organization in Ward 7, where approximately 9,380 households are headed by a single female.

10. Probate-Estates Project-\$50,000

Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) assists DC seniors in preparing and filing wills and other pertinent documents necessary to open probate. The Project will represent clients in court proceedings related to the probate estates. Through the probate process, the Project will untangle titles to homes, prepare new deeds titling real property, and file the deeds with the Office of Recorder of Deeds.

11. Project Eradicating Notario Deceit (END)-\$70,000

Ayuda's Project END advises, counsels, and represents immigrant victims of fraud in potential immigration, civil, and criminal processes stemming from fraudulent acts by "representatives" purporting to serve the immigrant community. These representatives are often known as "notarios" or "immigration consultants." The intended beneficiaries of Project END are immigrants with low incomes residing in the District who have been defrauded by a notario.

Domestic Violence/Victims' Rights - \$495,000

12. Domestic Violence Community Legal Services Project-\$140,000

Bread for the City's Domestic Violence Community Legal Services Project provides legal aid, including civil protection orders, divorce, child custody, and public benefits, to District residents with low incomes who are experiencing violence.

13. Domestic Violence Underserved Communities Holistic Representation Project-\$125,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia provides focused outreach and legal aid to domestic violence survivors in poor and underserved communities in DC. The project attorneys have also established an office at the Domestic Violence Intake Center located in DC Superior Court.

14. Empowerment Project-\$90,000

The Amara Legal Center provides free legal aid to individuals whose rights have been violated by involvement in commercial sex, regardless of reason for entry into commercial sex. The project's attorney provides legal assistance in the areas of child custody and support, civil protection orders, public benefits, crime victims' compensation, and record sealing.

15. Legal Services for Youth Survivors-\$50,000

Break the Cycle supports young people under the age of 25 by providing holistic civil legal representation including emergency legal assistance in civil protection order, divorce, child custody, child support, and civil or administrative cases related to being the victim of dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

16. Representation for Domestic Violence Victims-\$90,000

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project (DCVLP) represents domestic violence survivors in civil protection orders, custody, child support, and divorce matters. DCVLP utilizes a network of volunteer attorneys to address the severe shortage of free legal assistance for low-income people in the District who have urgent family law needs.

Education - \$193,000

17. Direct Representation & Systemic Advocacy-\$83,000

The School Justice Project (SJP) protects and advocates for the special education rights of students who are court-involved, ages 17 to 22, during incarceration and throughout their reintegration in the community. SJP attorneys work to increase access to appropriate special education in order to improve educational, employment, and life outcomes for this traditionally excluded student population.

18. School Discipline/Office of Administrative Hearings Extended Project-\$110,00

Advocates for Justice and Education addresses the increasing demand for legal representation and support in suspension and expulsion proceedings. The project provides on-site free legal assistance (information, advice and counsel, and/or brief services) to parents, guardians, or students at student disciplinary hearings before the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Employment - \$235,000

19. DC Paid Family Leave Access and Enforcement Program-\$20,000

First Shift Justice Project provides legal services to conduct community education to workers regarding the availability of paid leave insurance benefits including the DC Paid Leave law going into effect July 2020.

20. Employment Justice Project-\$165,000

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, through its Employment Justice Project, assists DC workers with low incomes recover stolen wages, fight discrimination, and ensure they receive their lawful wages by hosting clinics, conducting outreach, providing rights training, and representing clients.

21. Latina Outreach Project-\$50,000

First Shift Justice Project (FSJP) runs the Latina Outreach Project to prevent unlawful job loss among pregnant Latina women and new Latina mothers with low incomes. FSJP proactively reaches out to pregnant women to request pregnancy accommodations at work before they lose their jobs.

Family Law - \$330,000

22. Child Support Community Legal Services Project-\$95,000

The Child Support Community Legal Services Project, run by Bread for the City maintains a court-based legal services office at the Paternity & Support Branch of the DC Superior Court. The attorneys improve individual outcomes for custodial and noncustodial parents in their child support cases, enhance the fairness of the court process, and increase the efficiency of the Paternity & Support Branch.

23. Child Advocacy Project-\$40,000

The DC Volunteers Lawyers Project (DCVLP) is one of only two organizations in the District that provide a voice for children at the center of a custody debate. DCVLP works to decrease the number of children who are underrepresented and at-risk by serving as court-appointed Guardians ad litem.

24. Domestic Relations Limited Scope Project-\$40,000

The DC Affordable Law Firm provides advice and limited scope representation to litigants, including parents and third-party caregivers on civil cases in the Domestic Relations Branch including custody, child support, and divorce cases.

25. Child Support Community Legal Services Project-\$155,000

The Child Support Community Legal Services Project, run by Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia maintains a court-based legal services office at the Paternity & Support Branch of the DC Superior Court. The attorneys improve individual outcomes for custodial and noncustodial parents in their child support cases, enhance the fairness of the court process, and increase the efficiency of the Paternity & Support Branch.

General Services - \$475,000

26. Brief Services Unit-\$90,000

At Neighborhood Legal Services Program's Brief Services Unit, attorneys perform an initial diagnosis of legal problems and provide advice or brief service, when such limited assistance may be sufficient, to enable the individual to resolve the problem. The beneficiaries of the project are DC residents with low incomes who are living in Wards 5, 7, and 8.

27. Southeast Neighborhood Access and Underserved Needs Project-\$385,000

At Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia's office in Anacostia, attorneys assist Ward 7 and 8 residents with a range of civil legal issues, such as domestic violence and family law, public benefits, housing, and consumer law.

General Services to a Specific Population - \$185,000

28. Project HELP (DC Homebound Elderly Project)-\$100,000

Legal Counsel for the Elderly assists homebound elders with low incomes in need of wills, advance directives, and public benefits audits, as well as those affected by consumer scams and housing-related issues. The Project HELP attorney also draws support from a pool of pro bono attorneys and other volunteer professionals to provide increased legal aid to homebound seniors.

29. Transgender Project-\$85,000

Whitman-Walker Health assists DC's large transgender population on a variety of legal issues including discrimination in the workplace, at school, in housing, and in health care; public benefits; immigration; private health insurance; and obtaining accurate identity documents. The project serves transgender clients seeking assistance at its name and gender change clinic.

Health & Disability-\$550,000

30. Disability Rights Project-\$40,000

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC) provides legal assistance for individuals who seek representation for disability discrimination in the District. Discrimination against persons with disabilities impact all aspects of life – housing, education, work, recreation and participation in civic life; the most significant discrimination often occurs at the intersection of disability and race or gender.

31. Healthy Together Medical-Legal Partnership-\$320,000

Children's Law Center runs a medical-legal partnership in Northeast and Southeast DC. The project provides legal representation on a wide range of issues and health outcomes for children. Attorneys work with the clinic's doctors to identify and address each young patient's legal needs, such as substandard housing conditions, unmet educational needs, and lack of access to health care for urgent medical episodes.

32. Jenny Hatch Justice Project (JHJP)-\$60,000

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities provides legal representation, advocacy, education, and outreach to DC residents with low incomes and disabilities who are facing or in adult guardianship. The project focuses on protecting and advancing people with disabilities' Right to Make Choices - the principal prerogative all people have to make their own decisions and direct their own lives to the maximum of their capabilities.

33. Max Robinson Center-\$130,000

Whitman-Walker Health (WWH) provides legal representation, counseling, and outreach to people living with HIV/AIDS and other residents with low incomes in Wards 7 and 8 through lawyers based at its Max Robinson Center in Southeast DC. WWH offers its free legal aid to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals in DC, regardless of HIV status, and to health care patients at WWH regardless of sexual orientation, HIV status, or gender identity.

Housing-\$1,370,000

34. Community Lawyering Project-\$172,000

Bread for the City provides community lawyering at its site on Good Hope Road SE. The project's attorneys work directly with the community to help identify options to tackle issues affecting its residents and, when needed, provide substantial direct representation to the residents. The project focuses on preserving affordable housing and addressing housing conditions.

35. Foreclosure Prevention Project-\$68,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia provides representation to DC residents with low incomes in foreclosure cases. Their attorneys are present in court every week for the call of the judicial foreclosure calendar to provide information and assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure.

36. Housing Advocacy for People with Mental Illness Project-\$65,000

University Legal Services (ULS) addresses significant housing barriers faced by people with disabilities, especially people with mental illness, through systemic and individual advocacy for reasonable accommodations by housing and service providers. The project advocates for the availability of accessible community residential facilities and access to needed Medicaid home and community-based services to secure and preserve housing for people with disabilities. In addition, this project advocates on the behalf of individuals with disabilities who are at risk of institutionalization or eviction as a result of housing discrimination by public, subsidized or private housing providers.

37. Housing and Community Development Project-\$50,000

The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center (APALRC) provides legal assistance to the District's Asian immigrants with low incomes and limited-English proficiency regarding evictions, threats, illegal rent increase, and bad housing conditions, as well as illegal relocation, denial of access to housing applications, and lack of language access in Section 8 housing developments.

38. Housing Cooperative Preservation Initiative-\$70,000

Neighborhood Legal Services Program preserves tenant-owned limited equity cooperatives (LECs). The project's attorneys assist tenant groups to develop and maintain their LEC's administrative infrastructure and governance, advise on regulatory compliance, and provide on-going legal advice to LEC board of directors. The project's goal is to prevent problems that may cause these affordable housing cooperatives to convert to market rate housing.

39. Housing Justice Advocacy Project-\$210,000

The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia represents tenants and tenant associations in building-wide cases, as part of a larger housing preservation network that includes Bread for the City, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, and Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. This project focuses on cases involving the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, redevelopment, subsidy expirations, rent control, and housing conditions.

40. Housing Justice Project-\$200,000

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs' project supports its collaboration with Bread for the City, Legal Aid Society, and Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless to provide the full range of coordinated legal services for the purposes of preserving and expanding decent housing choices across the city. As part of the partnership, WLC focuses on addressing housing discrimination based on race, source of income, familial status and history of criminal conviction.

41. Housing Preservation Project-\$40,000

The DC Bar Pro Bono Center's project provides legal assistance in cases involving housing conditions and unlawful rent increases. The project's attorneys are based at the courthouse, and they also receive clients through their advice and referral clinic.

42. Increasing Capacity of the Fair Housing Clinic-\$110,000

Howard University School of Law provides community education through its Fair Housing Clinic and direct legal assistance and representation to tenants with low incomes who are facing discriminatory housing problems.

43. Stabilizing Communities Through Affordable Housing-\$224,000

Neighborhood Legal Services Program and Rising for Justice collaborate on preserving affordable housing by representing tenants and tenant organizations in housing conditions cases, zoning cases, misuse of barring notices, and many other issues that jeopardize the future of affordable housing in DC.

Immigration-\$160,000

44. CARECEN Legal Services Program-\$40,000

Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) provides legal assistance to immigrants in Washington, DC who require help regarding citizenship, naturalization and family-based petitions (family reunification). In addition, CARECEN legal staff assists with work authorization under the U Visa Program for victims of crimes in the US.

45. DC ACT Immigration Legal Program-\$40,000

African Communities Together provides the District's underserved African immigrant communities, particularly Africans with low incomes and limited English proficiency, with high-quality, culturally appropriate immigration legal services and immigration legal education.

46. Pro Bono Asylum Program-\$80,000

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition's Pro Bono Asylum Program (PBAP) provides free legal aid to survivors of torture who reside in DC and are seeking political asylum. PBAP's attorneys help survivors prepare their applications, affidavits, and evidence for asylum, as well as represent them in their asylum interviews.

Interpreter Bank -\$399,000

47. Community Legal Interpreter Bank-\$399,000

Since 2007, Ayuda has run a shared legal interpreter bank which provides assistance to legal aid providers using trained community legal interpreters. The project serves as a national model for coordinated, point-of-service legal interpreter services.