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Public Hearing on Mayor Bowser's FY23 Budget Request

Submission to the Council of the District of Columbia

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Testimony of Kirra L. Jarratt
The District of Columbia Bar Foundation

April 6, 2022

Introduction

Chairman Allen and Members of the Committee, my name is Kirra Jarratt. I am the DC Bar Foundation's Chief Executive Officer and a proud resident of Ward 4.

I want to thank the Council for trusting the DC Bar Foundation to administer Access to Justice Initiative funds since 2007.

The Foundation's mission is to transform the civil justice system so that District residents have a fair and equal legal experience. Our work breaks down barriers to access and offers upstream interventions that address legal problems earlier.

As the leading funder of civil legal aid in the District, we are a catalyst for systemic change. We foster collaborative, community-informed solutions that work. During the pandemic, we have seized on opportunities to rethink service delivery to get legal services to District residents where they are when they need them.

My testimony will briefly highlight four areas: 1) **How** we are doing our work, 2) The **outcomes** we are achieving, 3) The **impact** of the District's historic FY22 Access to Justice (ATJ) Initiative funding, and 4) Our **FY23 ATJ Initiative request**.

1. How we are doing our work

To leverage the maximum benefit with Access to Justice Initiative funds, the DC Bar Foundation focuses on the following approaches:

a) **We are centering community voices and experiences.** Changing systems begins by listening carefully to the persons most impacted by those systems. The Foundation centers community voices and experiences for multiple reasons.

- To guide systems design – During FY22, we hosted several client focus groups to hear community input on the design of a Coordinated Intake and Referral System that will connect many legal aid providers in the District, making it easier for residents to find and receive legal help.
- To inform our grantmaking - Participatory grantmaking is a philanthropic approach that engages constituencies in the grantmaking process. In collaboration with grantee Bread for the City, we launched a successful participatory grantmaking program in Anacostia in July 2021. Within the statutory requirements of ATJ Initiative funding, our vision is to increasingly work with District residents to co-design community-based responses and programs and make grant funding decisions.
- To understand how court processes can be improved - From July through November 2021, the Foundation supported the Family Law Learning Network to survey clients about their experiences with remote hearings during the pandemic. Overall, both litigants and their attorneys saw a considerable benefit to remote hearings and agreed that virtual platforms increased access and reduced barriers for many litigants with low incomes. The full report, *Litigant Perspectives on Remote Hearings in Family Law Cases*, was shared with key community stakeholders like the DC Superior Court's Family Court to inform reform efforts.

This type of community engagement is consistent with the Foundation's strategic framework, which calls for us to "engage the larger community to identify community priorities."

b) **We are promoting collaboration to increase access to services.** The Foundation facilitates coordination and collaboration among a growing network of legal aid organizations and other crucial community partners to transform services, increase upstream interventions, and achieve better outcomes for District residents. The Foundation envisions a future where access to civil legal aid does not depend on prior knowledge of the civil legal system, political power, or financial and other resources.

- Convening and mapping the network - In June 2021, the DC Bar Foundation convened nearly 60 legal aid providers, funders, community activists, social service providers, and other stakeholders to reimagine a more equitable civil justice system. The DC Legal Aid Transformations Network (DC LATN) emerged from this convening and will meet quarterly. Its purpose is to advance "a user-centered system, grounded in well-being, anti-racism, and anti-poverty." Launching a Coordinated Intake and Referral System is DC LATN's highest priority.

- The Foundation commissioned a first-ever mapping exercise of DC's civil legal aid network to understand how members currently interact and where there are opportunities to increase collaboration.

Our civil justice system is more efficient and accessible because of ATJ Initiative-funded coordination among networks of grantee organizations and other critical community partners.

c) We are prioritizing racial equity and justice. Access to Justice Initiative programs promote a more racially equitable civil justice system and recovery from the pandemic. The Foundation uses a racial justice lens to target a majority of its grants for the well-being of residents in Wards 5, 7, and 8, where nearly two-thirds of District Black families reside.

- Internal assessment - We commissioned racial equity assessments of the Foundation's grantmaking processes, operations, and overall structure, with the goal to develop a Racial Equity Roadmap that outlines specific steps and timelines to continue advancing DCBF's racial equity priorities within its Strategic Framework.
- Grantee diversity survey - In April 2021, the DC Bar Foundation surveyed grantees to collect demographic data on staff, leadership, and board composition.
- Training - We also continued to offer grantees a four-part training on racial equity and racial justice. Some 78 individuals from 24 organizations completed this training in 2021. In 2022, we launched a more advanced racial equity training, and 21 individuals from 11 organizations have already completed the first two sessions. Later in 2022, the Foundation will launch a Racial Equity Learning Network to help a small cohort of DCBF grantees develop racial equity work plans, continue deep learning, and implement racial equity strategies as part of organizational change efforts.

2. The outcomes we are achieving

For tens of thousands of District residents, Access to Justice Initiative programs help secure the fundamentals of life – **the roof over your head** (evictions and foreclosures); **family stability** (child custody, child support, education, guardianships, immigration); **personal safety** (protection against abuse); and **financial sustainability** (access to public benefits, protection from unscrupulous debt collectors, ability to file for bankruptcy).

As the following data shows, ATJ-funded programs and networks lead to **positive, life-changing outcomes** for District residents and make the community more stable.

- Tenants who receive legal representation through the Initiative have better outcomes. **Three out of every four tenants were able to remain housed**. Even

when possession of the rental unit reverted to the landlord, tenants frequently benefitted from the landlord dismissals and negotiated exit strategies which reduced the impact of being unhoused and often aligned with the tenant's possession wishes.

- A comprehensive list of outcomes is available on pages 22-31 in the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) Annual Evaluation Report for FY21*.

3. The impact of the District's historic FY22 Access to Justice Initiative Funding

As a direct result of the District's historic FY22 investment of $22.2M in the Access to Justice Initiative, the DC Bar Foundation:

- **Increased its grants by 91.3%** (from $10.135M FY21 to $19.385M in FY22) to address the growing demand for legal assistance. The Foundation supported legal aid organizations that assist DC residents with housing, domestic violence, family law, immigration, probate, public benefits, and consumer protection issues.
- **Supported more upstream work (new)**. With additional ATJ Initiative funds, grantees have prevented two-thirds of planned evictions for nonpayment through early outreach efforts. For example, since October 2021, grantees and partners have contacted 100% of tenants with scheduled evictions. Some 75% received knocks on doors to facilitate service, and 50% were connected to rental assistance. This early outreach model is now being used to reach tenants before their first court date and offer various services.
- **Birthed innovative approaches** like medical-legal partnerships and community-led, community-based interventions. For example, Foundation funding provided salary support for onsite attorneys to give legal advice to patients at health clinics in Wards 7 and 8 on issues related to chronic asthma exacerbated by unsafe housing and obstacles to securing necessary public benefits or mental and physical healthcare.
- **Buoyed ATJ Initiative grantees to expand their service model,** using in-person outreach to reach more tenants and offer legal and social services in collaboration with other community organizations. **(new)**
- **Strategically centered community voices and experiences**. For example, between July and November 2021, the Foundation facilitated a large-scale survey to gather litigants' experiences in DC Superior Court's Family Court with remote hearings. We shared the results with key community stakeholders like the courts to inform reform efforts. **(new)**
- **Promoted greater coordination** among a growing network of grantee organizations and other critical community partners. For example, a coordinated phone line launched by Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) partners in June 2020 has fielded more than 4,000 calls. Information about this phone line is now included on pre-court and court eviction notices. Additionally, the Foundation supports a network of grantees focused on family law issues.

4. FY23 Funding Request

Our FY23 budget request of $31.089M builds on the impressive results of the District's historic FY22 investment of $22.239M for the Access to Justice Initiative. Our request will support systemic investments for a more equitable civil justice system. The breakdown of our funding request is as follows:

a) Access to Justice Program (ATJ) Request ($19.739M)

In 2007, the DC Bar Foundation began awarding grants under the newly-launched Access to Justice Program (ATJ) when the DC Council designated DCBF as the administrator. ATJ supports legal assistance in three categories: (a) underserved areas, (b) housing-related matters, and (c) a shared legal services interpreter bank. Since 2007, the Foundation has administered over $76 million to provide critical legal assistance to DC's underserved residents with low incomes.

In January 2022, we awarded $10.3M in Access to Justice grants to 32 legal aid organizations. We anticipate making another $2.1M in ATJ grants in April 2022. This $12.4M total represents a **100 percent increase** over the $6.2M of ATJ grants awarded in 2021. A list of January 2022 grants is attached.

For FY23, we request $19.739M for the Access to Justice Program – an increase of $5.5M over FY22 funding ($4.0M for the Access to Justice Program and $1.5M for eviction diversion).

This increase will allow the DC Bar Foundation to support developing a game-changing **Coordinated Intake and Referral System** and other technological innovations and infrastructure to deliver legal services more efficiently. Coordinated Intake is an **essential but resource-intensive intervention.** With nearly fifty civil legal services providers in the District, finding legal help can be daunting. It is a complex system where legal aid organizations address different legal issues, offer diverse levels of assistance, use varied eligibility criteria, and have wide-ranging capacities. Many prospective clients never reach the door of a legal services provider to get the help they need. In partnership with the DC legal services community, the Foundation is leading the effort to develop a user-friendly, secure, accessible Coordinated Intake and Referral System. With a single phone call, prospective clients will talk with a trained professional navigator who will connect them with the provider that can best assist them.

Additionally, with increased funding, we will be able to:

- Make larger grants to meet the growing demand for current and new civil legal services, including expanding successful existing programs.
- Expand our participatory grantmaking efforts and foster collaborative, community-informed solutions that work, seizing on lessons learned during the pandemic.

- Support real community solutions, bringing in non-legal partners whose expertise and relationships will strengthen our civil justice network.
- Increase upstream interventions that increase economic security for households.
- Expand legal programs in other areas of demonstrated need.
- Evaluate practices and assess community needs in greater detail.
- Pursue other transformative strategies and implement proven solutions to serve District residents better.

b) Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) Request ($11.0M)

The DC Council established the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) through the Expanding Access to Justice Amendment Act of 2017 and designated the DC Bar Foundation as the administrator. Since 2018, the Foundation has awarded over $22.7M to DC legal aid organizations providing representation in eviction defense proceedings for District residents with low incomes.

In January 2022, we awarded $4.8M in CLCPP grants and anticipate awarding all remaining funds later this month. This $6.95M total is an increase of 76.7% over the $3.94M of CLCPP grants awarded in 2021. A list of January 2022 grants is attached.

In FY22, the Foundation received a $2.0M joint proposal from six grantees to fund collaborative upstream eviction diversion efforts to benefit 5,000 tenants in DC. The project aims to prevent evictions by partnering with community-based organizations to reach tenants at risk of displacement as early as possible and connect them with the support and services they need to stabilize their housing. Each of the six organizations outlined the services they would individually provide as part of the collaboration. This level of cooperation among legal aid organizations is groundbreaking and is only possible because of increased funding from the District.

For FY23, we request $11.0M for CLCPP -- an increase of $3.0M over FY22 funding. This increase will allow the DC Bar Foundation to:

- Provide more eviction-related legal services to a higher volume of DC residents at a time of unprecedented need.
- Support practice improvements identified through an evaluation of the existing program, including maintaining tenant outreach, community partnerships, and advocacy efforts; anticipating needed service level changes based on local laws and training accordingly; and incorporating tenant wishes into legal service goals.

c) DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program (DC LRAP) Request ($.35M)

The Council established the DC Loan Repayment Assistance Program (DC LRAP)

in 2007. The DC Bar Foundation is proud to administer DC LRAP, which supports legal aid attorneys working at nonprofit legal services providers, making less than $90,000, and living in DC. The program provides attorney awardees with a one-year, interest-free, forgivable loan of up to $12,000. When DC civil legal aid organizations can attract and keep skilled lawyers, more of our most vulnerable neighbors get the representation they need. Since 2007, the Foundation has forgiven more than $3 million in loans for more than 300 legal aid attorneys. LRAP applicants typically have salaries that range from $45,000 to $89,000, with an average debt of $139,000.

Over the past year, we have explored what improvements could be made to DC LRAP. As a result, we have made significant changes. In 2021, we contracted with Fosterus, a nonprofit with broad expertise in LRAP, to administer DC LRAP and made changes to the application process that we believe will make it easier for attorneys to take advantage of these forgivable loans. The most significant of these is moving from an annual application process dependent on legal aid attorneys providing information to a rolling enrollment process dependent on employers' giving the information.

For FY23, we are requesting level funding of $350,000 for DC LRAP. Based on historical and anticipated demand for DC LRAP assistance, we believe level funding will cover the requests we receive for loan forgiveness.

Conclusion

At a DC Bar Foundation event in 2020, the Mayor said that "affording [DC residents] the legal representation and assistance they need is fundamental to upholding our DC values." We agree.

The DC Bar Foundation is a catalyst for systems change. We are transforming the District's civil legal aid ecosystem by centering community voices, increasing coordination and collaboration among many stakeholders, and prioritizing racial equity. This work would not be possible without the continued generous funding and support of the DC Council.

Legal aid providers, social services agencies, District agencies, funders, and others collaborate as never before to benefit the community. As the Foundation engages an expanding network of stakeholders, we sense a strong desire to embrace change and do more. But this work cannot expand without more significant resources to support it.

In closing, I again want to thank the Council for trusting the DC Bar Foundation to administer Access to Justice Initiative funds. We consider this partnership to be an honor and a sacred trust.

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FY22 Grantees
First Grant Cycle

Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program - $4,660,468

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

1. Housing Preservation Project - $778,038 **(increased from $655,000 in FY21)**

Bread for the City's housing practice is the largest of their four legal practice areas. They have 12 housing attorneys, including a Managing Attorney, three Supervising Attorneys, and a paralegal. Together, these attorneys have over 50 years of experience in DC housing, civil legal services, and other relevant practice areas. Increased funding will help Bread bolster its capacity to serve tenants and provide additional support for the recruitment and training of pro bono attorneys to provide eviction defense.

2. Eviction Defense Practice - $591,018 **(increased from $410,000 in FY21)**

The DC Bar Pro Bono Center supports and contributes to key DCBF-supported networks. They operate the Landlord Tenant Resource Center at the DC Superior Court and staff the LTLAN intake hotline. The Pro Bono Center places more pro bono cases than any other legal services provider in the District. Pro Bono Center housing attorneys mentor pro bono attorneys through their Advocacy & Justice Clinic and the Housing Right to Counsel Project. Each housing attorney can mentor multiple cases simultaneously, which significantly increases the number of cases placed for pro bono representation and significantly leverages the impact of CLCPP funding.

3. Eviction Prevention Project - $1,177,000 **(increased from $1,100,000 in FY21)**

Legal Aid Society of DC worked with various organizations to advocate for the DC Council to pass an eviction moratorium. They are the largest and oldest general civil legal services organization in the District and currently coordinate the work of the Housing Right to Counsel Project, bringing together pro bono attorneys from 20 law firms and the federal government to work on eviction cases.

4. Housing Preservation Project - $573,262 **(increased from $485,000 in FY21)**

Legal Counsel for the Elderly's eviction practice assists clients with physical and cognitive impairments due to advanced age and helps clients avoid eviction while

connecting them with the support they need to manage their disabilities. They are uniquely situated to provide eviction defense services for the District's elderly residents with low incomes, enhancing the impact of court-based eviction defense projects.

5. **Eviction Prevention - $425,704** **(increased from $410,000 in FY21)**

   Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) has built out its model to provide services remotely and at its offices in Wards 5, 7, and 8. NLSP emphasizes extended representation and group representation. They take the lead on targeted outreach, working closely with Housing Counseling Services, Latino Economic Development Corporation, and Stomp Out Slumlords to support tenants in buildings with building-wide needs.

6. **Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program - $1,115,446** **(increased from $1,075,000 in FY21)**

   Rising for Justice is the only legal services provider in the District that runs clinical education programs for law students and social work students. They leverage their ability to represent tenants to increase and improve their services.

Access to Justice Grants Program - $10,288,814

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 - $473,044

1. **Civil Protection Order Project (CPO) - $41,754** **(increased from $40,000 in FY21)**

   Rising for Justice provides services for respondents in domestic violence cases, including helping those navigate recent changes in the law and court practice with the introduction of anti-stalking orders. In these cases, they are among the few institutional providers of representation for respondents.

2. **DC Jail and Prison Advocacy Project - $195,000** **(increased from $180,000 in FY21)**

   This project represents incarcerated DC residents with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities in pre-release applications for disability benefits, addresses neglect and abuse during incarceration through advocacy and monitoring, provides mitigation in parole and sentencing to reduce over-incarceration, and removes obstacles to reentry in supervision or behavioral health services. During the pandemic, due to legislation increasing decarceration, University Legal Services received more referrals for individuals who had already been released or were set to be released shortly thereafter. The project addresses systemic issues for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated DC residents with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities. The organization

successfully advocates for policy changes that encourage diversion instead of incarceration, improve the quality of behavioral and mental health services provided to incarcerated individuals, and work with government agencies to remove client housing and health care barriers.

3. DC Legal Connect - $101,464 (increased from $65,000 in FY21)

This project addresses the needs of low-income and homeless DC residents about Social Security benefits, criminal record sealing, estate planning, probate, and housing issues. Christian Legal Aid has a network of pro bono attorneys and community partners that support their work. It has continued to provide representation during the pandemic through remote services and targeted on-site support when appropriate. The majority of clients served by this project reside in Wards 5, 7, and 8, geographic priority areas for DCBF.

4. Removing Barriers to Opportunity Project - $89,826 (increased from $89,000 in FY21)

Forty thousand people are arrested annually in the District, and the collateral consequences of an arrest/criminal record include challenges in finding employment, housing, and education. Removing these barriers through expungement is particularly important now, given the pandemic's economic, housing, and other negative impacts. Rising for Justice leverages pro bono attorneys to assist their clients, 95% of whom are Black, in expunging their records. The majority of the clients served are also projected to be from Wards 5, 7, and 8.

5. Victim Legal Network of DC (VLNDC) - $45,000

VLNDC by the Network for Victim Recovery of DC is an intake and referral network staffed by a group of legal service providers in DC that provide legal assistance to victims of crime in DC. The network provides victims of crime with access to 24 different legal service organizations that can provide legal help in various issues, including (but not limited to) family law, immigration, and crime victims' rights. The network model improves intake and service delivery efficiency and provides a more seamless experience for residents.

Consumer Law – $1,294,980

6. Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project - $75,000 (increased from $70,000 in FY21)

By 2022, the Legal Aid Society of DC (LASDC) anticipates a great need for legal assistance to help individuals struggling with collection cases - because of the winding down of consumer debt relief, continuing financial hardships, and also new procedural and substantive legal issues arising as a result of the recently passed debt legislation. LASDC has expertise in representing and advocating for clients in this space where petitioners overwhelmingly are represented, and respondents overwhelmingly are not.

7. **Probate and Estate Planning Project - $75,281** **(increased from $50,000 in FY21)**
Legal Counsel for the Elderly is the only DC legal services organization providing full representation to seniors in probating estates. This work is essential as many low-income DC seniors live in homes titled in their parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents' names, which means they are not the titled owners, so they are not in a position to negotiate with the DC Office of Tax and Revenue or potential lenders to borrow money to stave off foreclosure and risk losing their homes. This project addresses the racial wealth gap and displacement, two issues of importance to DCBF.

8. **Debt-Related Legal Services - $280,980** **(increased from $145,000 in FY21)**
Tzedek DC's project provides DC residents legal help in debt collection and other consumer cases, including counseling in credit-related matters. This is a unique project that addresses an unmet need in DC. They are an active participant in DC-based working groups seeking to increase debt-related protections and change court policies and procedures that unfairly burden low-income individuals and families. DC's emergency debt protection measures ended September 23rd, and the organization expects a surge in cases as DC Superior Court increases operations.

9. **Project END (Eradicating Notario Deceit) - $149,955** **(increased from $80,000 in FY21)**
Project END combats and addresses fraud targeting immigrants, such as immigration legal services fraud and bail bond schemes. With its extensive language capacity, Ayuda can serve a wide range of immigrant populations.

10. **Economic Security Unit (ESU) - $274,172** **(increased from $100,000 in FY21)**
Neighborhood Legal Services Program's (NLSP) Economic Security Unit addresses multi-layered economic insecurity issues, primarily connected to racially discriminatory behaviors and policies. The project is mainly focused on addressing the following legal needs: securing public benefits, responding to denials or termination of public benefits, barriers to employment based on criminal records and background checks, unfair debt collection, credit reporting problems, and unaffordable or defaulted student loans. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, created additional obstacles to securing public benefits, and made it more difficult for residents to access vital legal and social services. This is especially true in Wards 7 and 8, where NLSP's offices are located.

11. **Polk Street Office - $399,502** **(increased from $372,000 in FY21)** Neighborhood Legal Services Program's (NLSP) Polk Street Office, located in Ward 7, provides legal services to a community that has been hit hard by the economic, social, and health crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The office is the only full-time legal service located in the community. NLSP's attorneys support clients in avoiding eviction and finding stable housing, securing

public benefits, accessing restitution for illegal debt practices, asserting their rights and protections as consumers, and navigating employment matters. As the COVID-19 pandemic has increased unemployment and homelessness, displaced families, and made it harder for clients to access public benefits and other vital resources, they have seen an increase in the need for legal and social services in the community served by the Polk Street Office over the past 18 months.

12. Disability Community Project - $40,090 NEW!

Tzedek DC's project will provide direct representation, community education, and outreach and engage in systemic advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities experiencing legal challenges in the following areas: debt, credit, and consumer protection. The staff lead has worked in advocacy for improving the availability and quality of legal services provided to persons with disabilities and has a disability herself.

Domestic Violence/Victims' Rights – $1,236,101

13. Empowerment Project - $223,540 (increased from $100,000 in FY21)

Amara Legal Center's single focus is providing trauma-informed services to survivors of sexual exploitation and sex workers, and the demand for their services continues to increase. They primarily serve clients from Wards 7 and 8, and their board of directors includes former clients.

14. Domestic Violence Community Legal Services Project - $241,574 (increased from $140,000 in FY21)

The project provides legal services in the following areas: civil protection orders, custody, divorce, child support, public benefits, immigration, criminal justice advocacy, and identity documents for DC residents who have experienced or are experiencing domestic or family violence. Bread for the City advances court and legislative policy efforts to protect low-income survivors and nurture collaboration among legal providers and other stakeholders to improve the efficiency and efficacy of assistance offered to survivors. This project provides legal services to a high-need population in Wards 7 and 8, geographic priority areas for DCBF.

15. Domestic Violence Underserved Communities Holistic Representation Project - $140,000 (increased from $130,000 in FY21)

Legal Aid Society of DC provides legal assistance to domestic violence survivors and their families in Civil Protection Order (CPO) and long-term family law cases. The project aims to help domestic violence survivors and their families achieve safety, stability, and independence by providing legal assistance at the Domestic Violence Intake Center at the DC Superior Courthouse.

16. Legal Services for Domestic Violence Victims - $198,887 (increased from $110,000 in FY21)

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project's (DCVLP) project is focused on providing comprehensive, trauma-informed legal and social services to low-income victims

of domestic and gender-based violence. DCVLP has noted that the need for their services has dramatically increased over the past 18 months, and during the first six months of 2021, they assisted with 47% more legal matters than they did in the same period in 2020. They anticipate the demand for services will continue to increase.

17. East of the River Women's Legal Services Project - $432,100 (increased from $175,000 in FY21)

The Safe Sisters Circle's project provides culturally specific, trauma-informed, and holistic legal services to Black women and girls who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse living in DC's Wards 7 and 8. They were recently selected by a group of community members from Wards 7 and 8 to receive grant funds through DCBF's participatory grantmaking pilot program.

Education - $305,748

18. Direct Representation & Systemic Advocacy Project - $150,000 (increased from $110,000 in FY21)

School Justice Project provides legal services to a high-need group of individuals. Their project is unique, and they are the only DCBF grantee with a specific focus on upholding the educational rights of court-involved DC students. Their multifaceted approach to change includes providing direct legal services to clients, empowering clients to become self-advocates through training and education, continuously evaluating the quality of services they provide to increase their effectiveness, and working with various stakeholders to accomplish policy change. They have successfully changed DC policies about the quality and quantity of educational resources provided to DC Superior Court-involved students. They are expanding their organizational capacity to serve clients in response to the increased need for legal and social services. They will need additional support for their work with DC's newly created Office for Students in the Care of DC.

19. School Discipline and Equitable Access to Education Project - $155,748 (increased from $120,000 in FY21)

Advocates for Justice and Education works to guarantee that all students have access to the public education they are entitled to, providing legal services to students and their families for school disciplinary hearings, individual education plans, virtual learning, and rights of students with disabilities. They are the only DCBF grantee with a specific focus on this issue area. The transition to virtual learning and its ongoing repercussions have increased the demand for these services.

Employment - $270,000

20. Employment Justice Project - $190,000 (increased from $170,000 in FY21)

This project, run by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, addresses workplace rights and protections violations through

direct representation, systemic litigation, and legal clinics. The need for protections for DC's low-wage workers has dramatically increased over the past 18 months.

21. Immigrant Mother Outreach Project - $50,000

First Shift Justice Project is increasing its staff capacity and has newly established partnerships with DC-based medical centers and the Georgetown Health Justice Alliance. They center their clients' needs in how they provide services, their organizational goals, objectives, and their advocacy and systems change efforts. This project provides legal services to immigrant mothers and their families, and the need for this type of service has significantly increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

22. DC Paid Family Leave Access and Enforcement Project - $30,000 (increased from $20,000 in FY21)

First Shift Justice Project's work is unique, and they are the only DCBF grantee with a specific focus on DC's paid family leave law. The project provides legal services to DC workers who need assistance applying for paid family leave insurance benefits, have been unjustly denied paid leave benefits and need representation to appeal, have experienced retaliation from their employers because they sought paid family leave benefits, and/or have experienced violations of related leave rights, including under DC's Family Medical Leave Act and DC's Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. The project seeks to support clients in accessing public benefits at a time when the pandemic has increased the likelihood of DC workers experiencing unemployment and economic hardship. The need for legal services for workers has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family Law - $1,161,591

23. Child Advocacy Program: Court-appointed Attorneys for Child-Victims - $172,751 (increased from $85,000 in FY21)

The DC Volunteers Lawyers Project (DCVLP) provides legal services to survivors of domestic violence, children, and other at-risk individuals. This particular project is focused on providing services to children who need legal representation. They have well-established strategies for evaluating their legal services' effectiveness, centering clients' voices and experiences in their decision-making processes, advocating for systemic changes, and building on existing partnerships with community groups and others. Since the summer of 2020, DCVLP has received an influx of referrals from the DC Superior Court for Child Advocacy Attorney appointments at a rate higher than pre-pandemic. Requests are more frequent, and the cases are more severe. DCVLP expects this trend to continue through 2022.

24. Child Support Community Legal Services Project - $116,379 (increased from $95,000 in FY21)

Run by Bread for the City, this project explicitly serves people of color and Black families in the District, utilizing child support as an anti-poverty tool for custodial parents and children and ensuring that support orders are calculated so that noncustodial parents do so are not trapped by damaging debt. Child support is a priority area given the economic impact of COVID-19 and the wind-down of various pandemic-related relief programs. There's also an anticipated increase in cases to be heard in the grant year, given the backlog of cases from 2020 to 2021. The majority of clients served by this project are from Wards 7 and 8, which are geographic priority areas for the Foundation where there are concentrated levels of poverty and unemployment.

25. Child Support Community Legal Services Project - $172,000 (increased from $155,000 in FY21)

Legal Aid Society of DC's project provides legal services to parents with child support issues. The Child Support Community Legal Services Project places attorneys at DC Superior Court and remotely via a hotline and virtual hearing representation. LASDC's work on child support and related legal issues has increased access to justice by changing court dynamics as DC judges and staff now view the project as a partner in promoting justice for clients. The need for legal services about child support and other custody issues has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is a backlog of cases that will need to be heard in the coming months.

26. Family Law Assistance Network - Domestic Relations Limited Scope Project - $210,547 (increased from $90,000 in FY21)

Operated by the DC Affordable Law Firm, the Family Law Assistance Network is a resource for DC residents with cases in DC Superior Court's family court. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in financial hardship for families and has negatively impacted the well-being of families, parents, and children. The presence of FLAN attorneys at the courthouse once in-person cases resume will ensure that eligible clients are provided with comprehensive legal and social services to help meet their needs.

27. Family Law Assistance Network - $79,914 NEW!

The project provides limited-scope, legal services to eligible residents litigating divorce, child custody and visitation, child support, and other cases in the Domestic Relations Branch of DC Superior Court's Family Court using a network model. DC Bar Pro Bono Center offers a hotline for clients and will have a court-based office when courts re-open. The organization has adopted racial justice as a goal of its strategic plan, and in 2022, it will develop a client advisory board to inform how to better tailor programs to meet client needs. This organization was a founding member of FLAN and co-founded another legal services network.

28. **KinCare Legal Defense Project - $150,000 NEW!**
This project provides legal representation in court and brief legal advice and education to relative caregivers who step up to care for at-risk DC children. DC KinCare Alliance addresses the unique needs of relative caregivers who raise DC children when parents cannot care for them due to COVID-19, mental health and substance use disorders, incarceration, death, abuse, neglect, and/or deportation. This is the only organization in DC dedicated exclusively to serving this relative caregiver population, and this proposal expands the reach of DCBF. The need for these legal services has increased due to COVID-19, with increased unemployment and medical costs and, in some cases, parents who suffer from the illness itself. These legal services help address racial wealth disparities: when relative caregivers take in children, they do not have access to the same resources as foster parents or low-income parents. As most of these caregivers are Black women, they are pushed further into poverty without support.

29. **Family Law Assistance Network - $200,000 NEW!**
Carried out by the Legal Aid Society of DC, the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN) is a resource for DC residents with cases in DC Superior Court's family court. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased financial hardship for families and has harmed the well-being of families, parents, and children. The presence of the FLAN at the courthouse once in-person cases resume will ensure that eligible clients are provided with comprehensive legal and social services to help meet their needs.

30. **The Family Preservation Legal Project - $60,000 NEW!**
Mothers Outreach Network's project will expand the reach and impact of DCBF by providing needed legal services to a hard-to-reach population: Black mothers engaged with child protective services. Through conversations with mothers, the organization has found a need for legal support in the following family law issue areas: contact with the foster system, the Child Protection Registry, custody, the child tax credit, the earned income tax credit, and more. They have a history of working with the target population and deep reach within the community. The project partially funds two attorneys who provide services and engage in systemic work along with the organization's executive director.

General Services - $683,516

31. Brief Services Unit (BSU) - $198,516 (increased from $120,000 in FY21)

Neighborhood Legal Services Program's (NLSP) Brief Services Unit provides clients immediate advice, limited services, and triage to other NLSP departments as needed. This approach, triage followed by immediate brief services, is efficient for serving large numbers of clients needing important but limited legal services. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased legal needs among the target population, and as various relief programs come to a close, NLSP's role will become even more critical. NLSP has offices in Wards 5, 7, and 8 and has community representation on its board of directors.

32. Economic Security for Underserved Communities Project - $485,000 (increased from $385,000 in FY21)

In 2021, in response to the high volume of requests for help in public benefits matters, the Legal Aid Society of DC (LASDC) shifted its focus from general civil legal services through community offices in Southeast DC to a public benefit focus to address this surge in need. They have expanded their project to reach underserved communities in DC's Wards 1 and 4 to help more DC residents move towards economic security. LASDC has extensive experience providing legal services and has seen an increased need for legal services due to the pandemic.

General Services to a Specific Population - $801,422

33. Homebound Elderly Legal Project - $100,634 (increased from $100,000 in FY21)

There has been an increased need for legal and social services for elderly clients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Legal Counsel for the Elderly has responded by conducting wellness checks with clients, advocating for systemic reforms to protect clients, and building relationships with community organizations to meet the emerging needs of elderly individuals.

34. Transgender Legal Care - $145,000 (increased from $85,000 in FY21)

With the increase in violence against transgender residents in DC, there has been an increase in the need for legal and social services in that community. Whitman-Walker Health is the only DCBF grantee with a specific focus on serving DC's transgender residents. Funding will support the organization in increasing its capacity to address the unmet legal needs of this vulnerable, underserved population.

35. Increasing Public Benefits Access - $114,172 NEW!

There has been an increased need to support elderly individuals unaware of the public benefits they are entitled to or who have had significant difficulty navigating the public benefits application process. Involving an attorney in the application process from the beginning means clients are much more likely to be accepted into social programs, have fewer appeals, and more quickly receive the benefits

they are entitled to. This project will support Legal Counsel for the Elderly attorneys in working with clients to navigate the public benefits process successfully.

36. Accessible Legal Services for Modest-Income DC Residents - $255,040 NEW!

DC Affordable Law Firm's (DCALF) Accessible Legal Services for Modest-Income DC Residents project plans to provide legal services to individuals in need of support on the following issues: family law, probate, estate planning, and more. The project's focus will be serving individuals whose income makes them ineligible for services from other legal services providers yet are unable to afford a private attorney (and are still considered low-income per DCBF funding eligibility requirements). DCALF has seen an increase in clients and the need for legal services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as individuals struggle with unemployment, eviction, loans and debt, and other issues.

37. The Perinatal Legal Assistance & Well-Being Project - $123,499 NEW!

Georgetown University's Perinatal Legal Assistance and Well-Being Project plays a vital role in addressing an unmet legal need at the intersection of health and racial justice. This particular project will address the unmet legal needs of pregnant and postpartum people receiving care at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. The project will focus on the following legal issue areas: housing, employment, insurance, and family law. The project benefits from the fact that attorneys are placed on-site at the hospital and can meet with clients in person, identify emerging and existing legal needs, and educate partners regarding patients' legal rights. The Health Justice Project has been in place for five years and pairs attorneys with medical and public health students to address clients' legal needs and connect clients with social services. Outreach is done at the hospital center through a legal screening and referral process, and the project's case management system helps capture case outcomes, data, and project impact.

38. Women's Reentry Legal Services - $63,077 NEW!

Community Family Life Services (CFLS) provides legal and other services to women who are returning citizens. They receive support from various groups, including DC Health, the Greater Washington Community Foundation, Meyer Foundation, and OVSJG. Clients receive legal support in the following areas: child support, custody, consumer issues, divorce, expungement, name change, probation issues, and more. Many of the clients served by CFLS are residents of Wards 5, 7, and 8, which are geographic priority areas for DCBF.

Health and Disability - $700,000

39. Healthy Together Medical-Legal Partnership - $400,000 (increased from $320,000 in FY21)

Children's Law Center's Healthy Together Medical-Legal Partnership connects Children's Law Center with three of DC's largest pediatric medical providers: Children's National Hospital, Mary's Center, and Unity Health Care. CLC has

expanded its community outreach efforts and reached additional clients in response to the increased need for legal and social services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

40. Max Robinson Center Project - $165,000 **(increased from $155,000 in FY21)**

Through this project, Whitman-Walker Health (WWH) plans to expand legal services for residents of Wards 7 and 8 through its Max Robinson Center. WWH is one of six DCBF grantees with a permanent office in Ward 8. WWH's model ensures legal services and supports their patient population's health and quality of life. The center is within walking distance of the Social Security Office. Wards 7 and 8 are geographic priority areas for DCBF.

41. Disability Rights Project - $55,000 **(increased from $45,000 in FY21)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has uniquely impacted people with disabilities in areas this project seeks to address, including rights to education, increased risk, and harm within psychiatric hospitals. Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs leverages partnerships with community-based organizations and law firms to engage in high-impact litigation.

42. Jenny Hatch Justice Project - $80,000 **(increased from $60,000 in FY21)**

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities' project addresses the following legal issues: adult guardianship, decision-making rights, alternatives to guardianship, support decision making, power of attorney, advance directives, and more. Their work leverages their existing partnerships with the ABA Commission on Law and Aging, the National Disability Rights Network, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, the Arc of the US, Project ACTION!, and the National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for legal and social services for individuals with disabilities.

Housing - $2,117,375

43. Foreclosure Prevention Project - $75,000 **(increased from $70,000 in FY21)**

Foreclosure prevention for low-income DC homeowners will be necessary given the end of the local foreclosure moratorium and the reality of rising home costs and income inequality in the District. Inability to pay rising property taxes would be why many older homeowners (often with no mortgages) face losing their homes. The Legal Aid Society of DC's project focuses on housing-related issues.

44. Housing and Community Development Project - $70,000

The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center works to preserve affordable housing in downtown DC, particularly for the Wah Luck and Museum Square communities in downtown DC. They connect vulnerable clients with language-appropriate legal and social services.

45. Community Lawyering Project - $264,496 (increased from $172,000 in FY21)

Through legal and policy advocacy and direct representation, this project supports the efforts of individual tenants and groups of tenants to preserve and increase access to safe and affordable housing in DC. Bread for the City has partnerships with community organizations, tenant organizers, DCBF grantees, and other institutions. They build coalitions that center the needs and experiences of their constituents to build community power, increase legal protections for residents, and achieve systemic change through advocacy. They have been working in Southeast DC since 1991, and they are well-regarded for their wraparound services and support for residents. This project builds on their existing housing work with the Cancel Rent coalition, the eviction rapid response group, ONE DC, Housing Counseling Services, and the Fair Budget Coalition.

46. Housing Advocacy for People with Mental Illness and Behavioral Challenges - $78,000 (increased from $65,000 in FY21)

University Legal Services Housing Advocacy for People with Mental Illness and Behavioral Challenges project supports individuals who experience difficulty accessing housing in DC due to mental illness or behavioral challenges. The project will serve clients whose lives have been made more difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic. ULS expects that 45% of the individuals served by the project will live in DC's Wards 5, 7, and 8, areas that are geographic priorities for DCBF.

47. Housing Cooperative Preservation Initiative (HCPI) - $146,741 (increased from $70,000 in FY21)

This project provides critical legal, technical, and financial services to limited-equity cooperatives (LECs). LECs offer a rare homeownership opportunity for low-income DC residents, the vast majority of whom are people of color. LECs address the racial homeownership gap and the wealth divide. Clients need legal support to maintain their status as LECs and avoid evictions. Neighborhood Legal Services Program of the District of Columbia helps keep affordable housing during a time when displacement and evictions have significantly increased. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated housing instability and made it more and more challenging for many DC residents to stay in their homes. LECs often receive assistance when set up, but once established, few receive assistance with the complex regulations, governance responsibilities, and financial management required to run them.

48. Housing Justice Project - $230,000 (increased from $200,000 in FY21)

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs project enforces fair housing law through outreach, education, advocacy, and litigation. Housing issues are a priority for DCBF, and there has been an increase in housing instability due to COVID-19.

49. Eviction Prevention by Protecting the Right to Organize - $162,000 NEW!

To increase housing stability, this project will empower tenants and tenant

organizations with the knowledge to assert their legal rights, as outlined by DC's tenants' right to organize statute. Through this project, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs will leverage partnerships with community organizations and law firms to do outreach and provide legal representation when appropriate.

50. **Housing Preservation Project - $149,070** **(increased from $75,000 in FY21)** DC Bar Pro Bono Center's Housing Preservation Project builds on an existing project that provides legal services to tenants. They are members of the existing Landlord-Tenant Legal Assistance Network and address the full range of housing issues presented by DC residents. Housing Issues are a priority for DCBF, and the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the need for housing-related legal services.

51. **Increasing the Capacity of the Fair Housing Clinic - $125,000** **(increased from $110,000 in FY21)**
Howard University's Fair Housing Clinic provides direct legal services and trains predominantly Black law students for career-long commitments to social justice work. The Clinic assists low-income tenants in legal matters related to housing, focusing on housing code violations, housing discrimination, and a small number of eviction defense cases. They receive over 100 legal requests annually, and the Clinic does not have the capacity to serve everyone seeking help. Initiative funds will allow the Clinic to take on more cases by hiring an additional full-time attorney to supervise law students. The majority of clients served by the Clinic are low-income single mothers from Wards 7 and 8, geographic priorities for DCBF.

52. **Stabilizing Communities Through Affordable Housing - $313,762** **(increased from $210,000 in FY21)**
Neighborhood Legal Services Program's Stabilizing Communities Project collaborates with Rising for Justice to preserve affordable housing by representing tenants and tenant organizations in building-wide conditions cases, illegal rent increase cases, and unlawful voucher terminations. The project will help address emerging issues that will increase the need for legal services, including the end of the eviction moratorium, TOPA rights and protections, the end of the landlord's ability to increase rent strikes, and the increase in tenant organizing. Collaboration between organizations produces referrals and ensures that clients' needs are effectively met. Experienced housing attorneys will provide direct representation alongside support from law students. NLSP will represent tenant associations and tenant groups, while Rising for Justice will represent individual tenants in the same buildings. This collaborative proposal builds on the strengths of both organizations and their roles in the CLCPP to increase impact and create results.

53. **Stabilizing Communities Through Affordable Housing - $326,806** **(increased from $302,000 in FY21)**
This project provides legal services to preserve affordable housing and improve housing conditions in DC. Attorneys will represent clients in building-wide

conditions cases, illegal rent increase cases, and unlawful voucher terminations. The need for these kinds of services will significantly increase over the coming months. Rising for Justice provides eviction diversion and defense services to clients who fall within Access to Justice eligibility standards but outside the requirements for CLCPP. This includes individuals with incomes between $32,200 and $57,650 and families of four with incomes between $66,250 and $82,300. This is a collaborative project with Neighborhood Legal Services Program.

54. Affordable Housing Preservation Project - $176,500 NEW!

This project provides legal and social services to tenants when evictions, displacement, and housing instability have significantly increased. Given DCBF's increased focus on housing issues, funding will support the Legal Aid Society of DC in increasing its capacity to keep tenants in their homes, provide legal services to prevent evictions and displacement, and improve housing protections for residents.

Immigration - $724,814

55. CARECEN Legal Service Program - $181,961 (increased from $60,000 in FY21)
This project will provide immigration legal services to DC residents focusing on the underserved Latinx community in Wards 1 and 4. Increased funds were provided due to the Central American Resource Center's (CARECEN) footprint in the community. They are one of three DCBF grantees with a specific focus on providing comprehensive legal and social services to immigrants from Central and South America. The proposal makes a compelling case for the need for services, including an increased need resulting from the recent administration's anti-immigration policies. The need for legal and social services has also increased as the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, increased barriers to accessing legal services and public benefits, and displaced families from their homes.

56. ACT DC Immigration Legal Program - $75,000 (increased from $65,000 in FY21)
African Communities Together provides African immigrant communities with culturally-specific immigration legal education and services. As the only DCBF grantee that focuses on this population, the ACT is working to build capacity to serve this hard-to-reach population: immigrants whose countries of origin are in West or Central Africa and Ethiopia.

57. TASSC Legal Services Program - $163,647 (increased from $80,000 in FY21)
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) is the only DCBF grantee focusing on serving immigrant survivors of torture and asylum seekers. They are a client-led organization with a unique membership model that centers the experiences of their clients in their strategic decision-making processes, policy and advocacy goals, and programming. The need for legal services for the population they serve has dramatically increased over the past year due to government transitions and new government directives about asylum and

deportation.

58. RELIEF: Representation & Legal Advocacy for Immigrant Families - $104,206 NEW!

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project has well-established strategies for evaluating their legal services' effectiveness, centering clients' voices and experiences in their decision-making processes, advocating for systemic changes, and building on existing partnerships with community groups and others. The need for legal services for immigrants and their families has significantly increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their existing network of community partnerships will help support this work. They plan to establish two new medical-legal partnerships with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (at GWU Hospital) and the Columbia Heights Branch of Children's National Primary Care. Their new legal fellow will be responsible for implementing these partnerships and host weekly legal clinics at both sites. In addition, their in-person immigration legal clinic re-opened to the public in September.

59. Free Legal Aid for Unaccompanied Immigrant Children in Washington, DC - $200,000 NEW!

KIND Inc. provides legal services to unaccompanied immigrant children and their families. They have an extensive network of pro bono attorneys that they leverage to support their work and work with community partners to refer clients to social services.

Interpreter Bank - $520,223

60. Community Legal Interpreter Bank - $520,223 (increased from $400,000 in FY21)

The Access to Justice grant program provisions specifies a legal language services bank as an area for funding. Ayuda is the only interpreter bank providing translation, interpretation, language access training, and advocacy for the Limited English Proficiency, Non-English Proficient, and Deaf communities. As the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and administrative agencies increase operations, they anticipate increasing demand for their services.