



January 31, 2023

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The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: FY24 Access to Justice Initiative Funding

Dear Mayor Bowser:

We hope that this letter finds you well. Congratulations on your historic third term. We share your hopes for a “transformational” term and believe that access to civil justice for District residents at-risk is a fundamental part of that vision. The Access to Justice Initiative (“Initiative”) that we have built together has made for a better DC. The Initiative’s strategic approach to addressing problems that put District residents and our community at risk – housing instability, economic risk and inopportunity, intrafamily violence, difficulty accessing benefits, fraud protection, elder injustice, and more – is a model for the Nation.

Thank you.

With increased funding in FY22 and FY23, Initiative grantees have greater capacity to partner with the District government and other stakeholders to address persistent civil legal problems. In the housing context, for example, grantee staff work hand-in-hand with the District government and others to prevent evictions. District tenants at imminent risk of eviction receive a knock on the door offering help in accessing critical benefit programs and are connected with legal support. **Those efforts prevented 70% of evictions sought by landlords between Fall 2021 and Spring 2022.** With eviction filings only increasing, maintaining and growing strategies like these – and comparable strategies in other legal areas discussed in our materials – is critical. We cannot risk backsliding. We must continue and accelerate our progress.

This requires growing Initiative funding in FY24. It also means identifying recurring, local support to replace Federal and local one-time funding used to support the program in FY22 and FY23. Losing and not replacing that one-time funding puts at risk the maintenance of projects that address District challenges that are only *increasing* as the pandemic wanes. **We ask that you approve our FY24 budget request of \$37.85M to continue and grow the impactful strategies currently funded by the program. As described further in our supporting materials, this includes \$25.5M for the *Access to Justice Grants Program*, \$12M for the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*, and \$350,000 for the *DC Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program*.**

The Initiative plays an irreplaceable role in advancing our shared vision of a more just, racially equitable community. As you said during an event celebrating the work of the DC Bar Foundation, the entity that administers the Initiative: “*Affording [District residents] the legal representation and assistance they need is fundamental to upholding our DC values.*” Your partnership with the Commission and the DC Bar Foundation is critical to this effort.

Sincerely,

Peter B. Edelman, Chair

James J. Sandman, Vice Chair

cc: Mr. Kevin Donahue, City Administrator
Mr. John Falcicchio, Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Ms. Beverly Perry, Senior Advisor, Executive Office of the Mayor
Ms. Betsy Cavendish, General Counsel, Executive Office of the Mayor
Ms. Lindsey Appiah, Acting Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice
Ms. Jennifer Reed, Director, Office of Budget and Performance Management
Ms. Cheryl Bozarth, Interim Director, Office of Victim Services & Justice Grants
Mr. Eugene Adams, Director, Mayor's Office of Legal Counsel
Mr. Tommy Wells, Director, Mayor's Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs
Ms. Kirra Jarratt, Chief Executive Officer, DC Bar Foundation
Ms. Nancy Drane, Executive Director, DC Access to Justice Commission

FY24 PUBLIC FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Since fiscal year 2007, the District government has recognized the need to make legal help available to those unable to afford it through the Access to Justice Initiative (“Initiative”). The Initiative’s strategic approach to addressing problems that put low-income and underserved District residents and our community at risk is a model for the Nation. The program currently falls within the purview of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (“OVSJG”). The DC Bar Foundation (“DCBF”) has thoughtfully administered the Initiative since its inception.

FUNDING REQUEST

The District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission¹ requests that the District fund the Initiative at \$37,850,000 in FY24. This is an overall increase of \$6,161,000 from FY23.² We request local, recurring funding, including replacing Federal and local one-time support used in FY22 and FY23.³ The request breaks down as follows:

- **\$25,500,000 for the Access to Justice Grants Program.** This funding will support several efforts including: (1) \$20,000,000 (an increase of \$4,261,000 from FY23) for *access to justice grants* to meet the increasing demand for civil legal services in communities of highly concentrated poverty; expand representation in housing matters; and maintain a legal interpreter bank; (2) \$4,000,000 (an increase of \$1,000,000 from FY23) to support efforts targeted at *preventing eviction filings*; and (3) \$1,500,000 (an increase of \$500,000 from FY23) to support the development of a *coordinated intake and referral system* to make it easier for District residents to access legal services. Funds will also support evaluations to better measure the impact and effectiveness of the program in meeting community need.
- **\$12,000,000 for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program.** This program funds legal representation in eviction-related proceedings. This increase of \$1,000,000 from FY23 funding will support more eviction-related legal services to DC residents at a time of increasing need, as well as the continued evaluation and assessment of the program.
- **\$350,000 for the DC Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program.** This program assists grantee lawyers with student loan debt. This request for level funding⁴ will support the work of legal aid attorneys to deliver needed services to DC residents, ensure a high quality, diverse pool of legal services professionals, and is an important retention and recruitment tool for legal services employers.

¹ Created by the DC Court of Appeals in 2005, the Commission addresses civil justice barriers experienced by low- and moderate-income DC residents and includes judges & staff from local courts and tribunals, private bar leaders, legal services representatives, law school faculty, and business & community leaders. Learn more at <https://dcaccesstojustice.org/>.

² The FY23 Local Budget Act reads, “... provided, that \$31,689,347 shall be made available to award a grant to the District of Columbia Bar Foundation for the purpose of administering the Access to Justice Initiative and the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, of which not less than \$950,000 shall be available to fund the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program, and of which not less than \$11,000,000 shall be available to fund the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program; provided further, that the funds authorized for expenditure for the Access to Justice Initiative, the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program, and the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program shall remain available for expenditure, without regard to fiscal year, until September 30, 2023.” Fiscal Year 2023 Local Budget Act of 2022, [Bill 24-486](#) (Signed by the Mayor on July 13, 2022)

³ The sources of the Initiative’s FY23 appropriation include \$15,589,000 in local recurring funds and \$16,100,000 in a combination of Federal and local one-time funds.

⁴ This is equal to the recurring funding of \$350,000 appropriated to LRAP in FY23. Another \$600,000 in local, one-time funds appropriated to LRAP in FY23 support a one-time investment in repaying loan principal or interest of those applicants whose loans would not otherwise be eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

KEEPING DISTRICT FAMILIES STABLY HOUSED

Initiative funds support a continuum of strategies that aim to keep District families safely housed:

- Through the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*, Initiative grantees provide legal help and representation to tenants facing eviction in DC Courts and in other eviction-related proceedings. Between July 2021 and June 2022, 70% of tenants served by CLCPP grantees with an active writ of eviction at the time of intake remained housed.
- New funding for the *Access to Justice Grants Program* in FY22 and FY23 supports additional prevention-based strategies and partnerships aimed at *preventing* evictions and eviction filings from occurring. For example, in the last quarter of 2022 alone there were 818 knocks on doors to offer help to those on the brink of eviction, 382 outreach letters sent, and 16 ‘know your rights’ presentations delivered (with 255 attendees) – all aimed at eviction prevention.
- Finally, the *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports other housing-related projects focused on keeping District residents stably housed in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.

Our FY24 funding request includes \$12M to support eviction-defense through the CLCPP program; \$4M to support eviction prevention and diversion efforts through the Access to Justice Grants program; and additional funding to support other housing-related efforts through the Access to Justice Grants program. To learn more about the Initiative’s housing strategies, see “Appendix A: Keeping District Families Stably Housed.”

HELPING DISTRICT RESIDENTS ADDRESS COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

The Initiative also supports a wide range of other legal services to support District residents beyond housing through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. In FY21 and the first half of FY22, Initiative grantees helped more than 38,000 District residents through these efforts. Some examples of the life-changing work the Initiative supports include:

- *Keeping individuals and families safe* through legal services and crisis safety planning for survivors of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and sex trafficking and exploitation.
- *Promoting family stability* through early intervention legal services for children and families at-risk of entering foster care, representation of District parents and caregivers trying to resolve family conflict or child support issues, and specialized support for custody-involved children.
- *Managing health crises* by helping District residents secure public benefits, gain access to housing, food, and medications, identify legal remedies to health problems like asthma, and by providing specialized services through medical-legal partnerships with District health systems.
- *Specialized support for individuals with disabilities*, including ensuring safe and healthy environments and combatting discrimination.
- *Assisting seniors aging in place* with estate planning, public benefits support, combatting fraud and abuse, and safe-keeping inter-generational transfer of property.

- *Stabilizing credit for low-income residents and helping protect critically needed funds* by helping residents fight predatory lending and illegal debt collection schemes and avert negative court judgments and credit reports.
- *Protecting wages and jobs* by helping District residents recover stolen wages, fight discrimination and harassment, and seek assistance from employment-related programs.
- *Promoting economic security* by ensuring District residents secure benefits for which they are entitled through advocacy and legal representation involving unemployment insurance, TANF, SNAP, SSI and SSDI, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits.
- *Promoting education opportunities for youth at risk* including legal support to students and parents to prevent school exclusion and ensure access to a free and appropriate education.
- *Re-entry support for returning citizens* to help them transition back to the community after incarceration and navigate legal challenges in education, custody, employment, consumer protection, and expungement matters.
- *Support the District's growing immigrant population* with legal help in combatting notario fraud, protecting unaccompanied minors, and offering culturally specific legal services to targeted populations within the immigrant community.

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also funds the Community Legal Interpreter Bank, a one-of-a-kind model operated by Ayuda that enables low-income residents who are limited English proficient or Deaf to access services from dozens of nonprofit legal services providers through the District.

Efforts to evaluate and measure the impact of the *Access to Justice Grants* program against the growing community need are also supported through these funds.

Our FY24 funding request includes \$20M in Access to Justice Grants Program funding to support efforts in these areas. To learn more about the wide range of work funded, see "Appendix B: Helping District Residents Address Community Problems."

MAKING OUR LEGAL SYSTEM MORE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH COORDINATED INTAKE AND REFERRAL

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports an effort to bring Coordinated Intake and Referral to the District. The vision is that for District residents, there will be 'no wrong door' to accessing legal help. Instead of being forced to contact multiple organizations, District residents seeking help will have a single point of entry, where they'll be connected with someone who will listen to their problems and connect them with curated resources that will address their problems and facilitate a connection with a legal services provider that may have the capacity to help. With a civil justice system as complex as the District's, this system is desperately needed. No other jurisdiction has attempted an approach at a scale the DC Bar Foundation contemplates for the District.

Our FY24 funding request includes \$1.5M in Access to Justice Grants program funding to support Coordinated Intake and Referral. To learn more, see "Appendix C: Making Our Legal System More Accessible through Coordinated Intake and Referral".

RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED, EXPERIENCED LAWYERS TO SERVE DISTRICT RESIDENTS

The *DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program* ("DC LRAP") is a critical tool for maintaining a talented, passionate, and diverse corps of legal services lawyers. With an average indebtedness of approximately \$200,000 and the average salary of enrolled participants at \$69,800,

this benefit incentivizes attorneys to devote their skills to helping the District's vulnerable population and helps legal services employers recruit and retain high-quality, experienced staff.

Our FY24 funding request includes \$350,000 to support loan repayment for the District's legal services attorneys. To learn more, see "Appendix D: Retaining Highly Qualified, Experienced Lawyers".

CONTINUING NEW AND EXPANDED SERVICES MADE POSSIBLE WITH FY22, FY23 FUNDING INCREASES

Meeting our FY24 funding request is critical to ensure that we maintain and build on this important work. Notably, additional FY22 and FY23 funding allowed DCBF to increase support for proven projects and provide new funding to efforts that address areas of unmet civil legal need. The District must maintain these increases and meet our FY24 funding request for these projects to continue. District residents benefitting from these expanded and new services include:

- District residents at risk of eviction and experiencing housing instability;
- Survivors of domestic- and gender based- violence, particularly those in Wards 7 and 8;
- District families and children, including court-involved families, low-income mothers (with targeted support to Black mothers), children at the center of child custody disputes, and pregnant and post-partum individuals;
- District residents experiencing economic insecurity or consumer debt issues, including targeted community efforts in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 and for those of modest means;
- Older District residents;
- Returning citizens; and
- The District's immigrant population.

To learn more about new and expanded projects funded through the District's FY22 and FY23 investments, see "Appendix E: New and Expanded Support in FY22 and FY23."

MEETING THE GROWING NEED FOR LEGAL HELP

Despite the District's significant investment in the Initiative over time, the community need for these critical, free legal services continues to outpace available resources:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great.* The most recently available data shows that rates of litigants appearing in court without a lawyer are as high as 75-97% in DC Courts and at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings, with case filings rising. For example, domestic relations matters increased by 42% in 2021, suggesting a growing need for legal services to help litigants address both new and ongoing, unresolved family law matters.
- *Evictions continue to rise.* According to the most recent U.S. Census data, 42,496 of those DC adults in rental housing surveyed reported being behind in rent and 9,729 reported it was "very" or "somewhat" likely that they'll have to leave their house within 2 months due to eviction.

- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need.* One domestic violence grantee handled 53% more legal matters during the first 6 months of 2022 than the same period in 2019. DC SAFE experienced 86,549 calls to their Crisis Response Line – the source of a majority of Initiative grantee referrals for Civil Protection Orders – between March 1, 2020 and April 30, 2022.
- *Changes in the law and new protections available to District residents require legal support.* District residents navigating new legal terrain will need help in understanding and vindicating new rights from legislation like the Intrafamily Offenses and Anti-Stalking Orders Amendment Act, the Protecting Consumers from Unjust Debt Collection Practices Amendment Act, the local Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion Act, and the Student Fair Access to School Act.

These are just a few examples of growing community need. *To learn more, see “Appendix F: The Initiative’s Role in Addressing Community Need.”*

APPROVING OUR FY24 BUDGET REQUEST IS NEEDED TO ENSURE INITIATIVE PROGRAMS CONTINUE

The Initiative has fundamentally changed civil justice in the District by increasing the capacity and reach of organizations to address District residents’ legal needs with a continuum of services that provide the legal help they need, when and where they need it. The Initiative has brought and will continue to bring innovative and transformative solutions to problems that have long challenged District residents through proven and new strategies. With DCBF’s leadership, the Initiative uniquely promotes collaborative planning and service delivery. Grantees have launched networks where they come together to collaborate, learn, and improve. Resources are used more efficiently when organizations are well-positioned to partner, and networks promote collective learning, the adoption of consistent and effective best practices, and economy of scale. Together with program evaluation, DCBF is promoting continuous improvement towards matching community need with impact.

Fully realized, this FY24 budget request will allow Initiative grantees to multiply successful interventions and develop new ones at a time when the need is more profound than ever before. DCBF is committed to ensuring that the funded programs and services continue to effectively serve District residents.

Civil legal services make government systems more effective for residents and are part of the critical safety net for District residents living in poverty. When DC residents have greater access to justice, this means greater family stability and economic opportunity and a better overall quality of life in the community.

There is no higher function of government than to ensure that all of its residents, no matter their economic status, have equal access to justice. You and the District government have embraced this most fundamental of obligations through your support of the Initiative. **We respectfully request that you approve our FY24 request of \$37,850,000 to support strategies to serve the District’s most vulnerable residents and enable them to participate fully in the District’s recovery and renewal.**

APPENDIX A: KEEPING DISTRICT FAMILIES STABLY HOUSED

Initiative funds support a continuum of strategies that aim to keep District families safely housed. The *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* provides legal help and representation to tenants facing eviction matters in DC Courts and in other eviction-related proceedings; the *Access to Justice Grants Program* supports additional prevention-based strategies and partnerships aimed at *preventing* evictions and eviction filings from occurring; and the *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports other housing-related projects aimed at keeping District residents stably housed in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.

The need for expanded support in this area is urgent as eviction moratoria and Federal rental assistance expire and evictions rise. The Initiative's resources have positioned DCBF and Initiative grantees to play a facilitative role in addressing the District's eviction crisis and fostering multi-sector collaboration between legal services providers, the courts, community-based organizations, other community leaders and the District government.

Eviction defense is a necessary intervention, and our FY24 budget request seeks funding of \$12,000,000 for the ***Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program ("CLCPP")*** to ensure District tenants facing eviction matters in DC Courts have the legal help they need to protect their rights, assert legitimate defenses, and negotiate agreements that allow them to maintain their housing with achievable terms. The critical nature of this support is demonstrated by the work accomplished through CLCPP, as outlined in greater depth in DCBF's comprehensive evaluation reports⁵ and summarized below:

- CLCPP grantees jointly maintain the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network ("LTLAN"), a coordinated and accessible telephone-based intake and referral system for low-income litigants to be connected with an attorney from a CLCPP grantee organization. Grantees ensure LTLAN information is widely available, including through partnerships with community organizations, in mailed court documents about upcoming hearings, and through announcements during court hearings themselves. Since its launch in June 2020 and through December 2022, LTLAN has conducted 7,294 intakes for tenants and small landlords seeking help.⁶ In the first half of 2022, 71% of clients reached CLCPP grantee organizations through LTLAN.⁷
- CLCPP grantees have a regular presence in court hearings to connect with unrepresented tenants to offer services. This includes remote hearings, where CLCPP grantees observe how the remote process is working for low-income tenants and offer suggestions for improvement. Judicial officers have found the CLCPP's role in serving court users during this challenging time instrumental. Robust data collection for the CLCPP program began in August 2019. Since that time and through June 2022, CLCPP grantees have closed 6,048 eviction and voucher termination cases, providing legal assistance to 5,101 low-income DC residents.⁸
- CLCPP grantees participate in DC Superior Court's Landlord Tenant Working Group and its Landlord Tenant Rules Committee to provide recommendations to the Court on process improvements and other topics. Court-related advocacy also involved participation in pending

⁵ See [NPC Research, *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) Annual Evaluation Report, FY2021 \(October 2021\)*](#) and [NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2022\)*](#). Another good exploration of these efforts is available at [Annemarie Cuccia, "We're Trying to Make it a Level Playing Field: How a New Hotline Helped Stop Two-Thirds of Evictions in DC," *The DC Line* \(August 22, 2022, updated December 9, 2022\)](#).

⁶ Information on file at the DC Bar Pro Bono Center.

⁷ [NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2022\)*](#) at 8.

⁸ *Id.* at 2. The case volume and rate of closure was impacted by various stages of the pandemic.

cases addressing the constitutionality of the District's emergency law prohibiting the filing of new eviction cases. CLCPP grantees also continue to play a critical role in advocating for and providing oral and written testimony in support of legislative protections for tenants, including testimony before various committees of the DC Council.

- In order to leverage funds effectively, CLCPP organizations collaborate to train pro bono attorneys, referring cases for representation whenever possible. CLCPP organizations hosted a five-part eviction law and defense training series attended by 145 pro bono attorneys in 2021 and another, in 2022, had 73 participants for the training and 164 attorneys for a series of courthouse tours.⁹

The Initiative's Impact – Eviction Defense

- ▶ Between July 2021 and June 2022, 70% of tenants served by CLCPP grantees with an active writ of eviction at the time of intake remained housed.¹⁰
- ▶ 87% of tenants represented in the most recent reporting period of January to June 2022 retained possession of their home. Of the remaining cases, the vast majority resolved through a settlement with the landlord or a voluntary move out.¹¹
- ▶ Tenants who came to CLCPP for help with housing voucher terminations have seen them either rescinded (67%) or delayed (7%) after CLCPP intervention. (The most recent reporting period had an even higher percentage of 91% either rescinded or delayed.)¹²
- ▶ While CLCPP serves a range of residents in all eight Wards, it has most benefitted female (61%) and Black (76%) residents; those aged 60 or older (22%); and residents of Wards 7 and 8 (42%).¹³
- ▶ CLCPP serves the District's most vulnerable residents; 74% had incomes below 100% of poverty (currently \$27,750 for a family of 4); 39% are households with a minor child; in 41% of cases the tenant or a household member is disabled; and 49% are eligible for and receive subsidized housing.¹⁴

The **Access to Justice Grants Program's additional, new investment in Eviction Diversion** allows DCBF and Initiative grantees to also pursue *prevention*-based strategies to halt evictions, including more directly involving non-legal, community-based organizations as partners. Our FY24 request of \$4M to specifically support eviction diversion efforts will allow Initiative grantees to continue work with canvassers to knock on doors and offer other support to ensure tenants at risk of eviction are aware of the availability of services to help:

- Grantee organizations work to identify those tenants at risk of eviction by requesting and tracking data on pre-court notices served on tenants, new case filings, upcoming hearings, new judgments, and new writs, and then using this data to inform coordinated outreach with tenant canvassers, housing counselors, and relevant government agencies, including the Office of the Tenant Advocate.

⁹ *Id.* at 18.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 13.

¹¹ *Id.* at 13. For a review of outcomes, see *id.* at 11-17.

¹² *Id.* at 17.

¹³ *Id.* at 4, 6.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 6-7. The H.H.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines are available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>.

- Grantees ensure tenants are aware of their rights that may allow them to avoid eviction, critical when tenants often misunderstand relevant rules and renter protections that apply to them. This outreach includes sending postcards with tenants' rights information to buildings where tenants may be facing eviction; holding outreach sessions with tenant associations, tenant organizers, and other community service organizations; holding 'pop up' events on-site at buildings; and using social media, mail, and community partners to educate the public. They also educate tenant organizers about the coordinated intake line they maintain so that this information is shared with tenants. Grantees participate in training and outreach events held by other community organizations, including Housing Counseling Services (the District's leading rental assistance provider), the Latino Economic Development Center, DC Public Libraries, DC Public Schools Early Childhood program, local hospitals, and various school groups.
- Initiative grantees approach this work holistically, also working to connect District residents at-risk with related supports that could help them become stably housed, such as disability, unemployment, and training plans if facing long term financial issues; and help with issues that may affect housing stability, such as deep cleaning and therapy intervention for hoarding. With additional funding, Initiative grantees have been able to hire staff whose duties include connecting tenants to services that will help them remain stably housed.
- DCBF co-leads the DC Eviction Prevention Working Group with the Greater Washington Community Foundation and with support from the Urban Institute, a group set up after the White House's Eviction Prevention Summit. Here, Initiative grantees help lead strategic partnering between lawyers, housing providers and landlords, the District government, housing counselors and organizers, and the court to reach tenants in the community with a goal of avoiding eviction. The Working Group has developed a multi-faceted collaborative framework that calls for increased community outreach and education, more partnering between Initiative grantees and community-based canvassers, and more engagement with housing providers and tenants alike before landlords file eviction actions.

The Initiative's Impact - Preventing Evictions

In the fourth quarter of 2022 alone, there were:

- ▶ 818 knocks on doors to offer help to those on the brink of eviction
- ▶ 382 outreach letters sent
- ▶ 16 separate 'know your rights' presentations attended by 255 individuals ¹⁵

Finally, securing affordable housing goes beyond eviction prevention. FY24 support for the **Access to Justice Grants Program** will support numerous other housing strategies grantees employ to keep District residents in safe, healthy housing, including:

- helping tenants facing environmental health hazards and negative housing conditions secure health-saving improvements from landlords and property owners through individual and building-wide advocacy;

¹⁵ On file with Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program grantees.

- keeping families in their historic communities through work in foreclosure and estate administration at a time when intergenerational housing and communities are at risk of gentrification;
- promoting housing preservation by safeguarding low-equity housing cooperatives, tenant organizations, and other groups that seek to keep District residents in their homes;
- supporting fair housing and combatting housing-based discrimination; and
- keeping tenants in their housing by combatting illegal rent increases and unlawful voucher terminations.

The Initiative's Impact – Healthier Homes

- ▶ A disproportionately high number of children suffer from asthma in the District of Columbia, with the rate in the Southeast quadrant of DC 10 times that of the rate in the Northwest quadrant.¹⁶
- ▶ Environmental hazards like mold, lead, and vermin significantly exacerbate asthma and often lead to emergency room visits and hospitalizations.
- ▶ Initiative grantees that provide legal support to families addressing these conditions see children's health markedly improve – sometimes within days – after the conditions are addressed.

¹⁶ Children's National Medical Center, *IMPACT DC*, available at <https://childrensnational.org/departments/impact-dc-asthma-clinic>.

APPENDIX B: HELPING DISTRICT RESIDENTS ADDRESS COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

The Initiative also supports a wide range of other services to support District residents beyond housing through the **Access to Justice Grants Program**. These projects address some of the most urgent and profound challenges District residents face. Requests for help have increased, with vulnerable populations particularly susceptible to legal risk. Even cases that have not grown in number have demanded greater capacity to service them. Our FY24 budget request seeks funding of \$20M for access to justice grants to support and grow civil justice projects, including ensuring language access and robust evaluation of funded programs.

Some examples of the life-changing work the Initiative supports include:

- *Keeping individuals and families safe.* Grantees offer trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in all eight Wards. Grantees have mobilized to offer support in the form of emergency legal services and crisis safety planning and have launched new and expanded virtual and in-person clinics to meet the growing need. Court-based services are essential when the most recently available data¹⁷ show that 88% of petitioners in domestic violence matters seeking civil protection orders lack counsel. Specialized services also support survivors of sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and victims of crime.
- *Promoting family stability.* The Initiative supports a wide range of programs that promote family stability. At least three programs aim to prevent children from entering the foster care system through early intervention legal services at key points of instability, legal support for relative caregivers seeking to step in to care for children whose parents are unable to care for them, and support to parents whose families are at-risk of entering the foster care system. A network of providers also provides representation to District residents trying to resolve family conflict in the DC Superior Court, with a separate program aimed at providing specialized, trauma-informed support to children involved in custody disputes who are identified as being in critical need of representation. Representation of parents and primary caregivers with child support issues is also provided. Notably, many of these services are offered on-site at the courthouse, where 80-97% of litigants traditionally pursue these cases without legal help.¹⁸
- *Managing health crises.* Funds support medical-legal partnerships that place lawyers alongside medical staff at some of the District's highest-volume primary care providers, including projects that offer specialized services to children, pregnant and postpartum individuals, and the transgender community. Legal services providers continue to help low-income DC residents stay stable and healthy by pursuing and maintaining local and Federal benefits and gaining access to housing, food, and medications, as they continue to identify legal remedies for health problems, such as uncontrolled asthma due to mold-infested homes.
- *Specialized support for individuals with disabilities.* The Initiative supports a wide range of projects aimed at serving individuals with disabilities, including ensuring the least-restrictive options for those facing undue adult guardianship, assisting those facing housing challenges due to mental illness or behavioral challenges, and combatting discrimination based on disability or medical status.

¹⁷ [D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia \(December 2019\)* at 204.](#) A summary of representation rates in DC Courts and the DC Office of Administrative Hearings is available at https://dcaccesstojustice.org/reports_extra.html

¹⁸ *Id.*

- *Assisting seniors aging in place.* Low-income seniors get support in drafting wills and advance directives, renewing public benefits, fighting scams, and dealing with housing-related issues. Probate is a long-standing gap in our civil legal services network. While for years there was only one legal services provider offering services in probate matters, expanded Initiative funds have allowed more legal services providers to develop a practice in this area. Low-income, Black, and Latinx populations are less likely to have wills and estate plans, leading to complex probate proceedings after a death in the family and threatening intergenerational transfer of property. Legal help to navigate these complicated systems is essential.
- *Stabilizing credit for low-income residents and helping protect critically needed funds.* Funded programs 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. They also seek to avert or minimize the extraction of wealth from DC residents by debt collectors, which occurs disproportionately against Black and Latinx DC residents. The District saw an alarming number of these consumer problems before the pandemic, and providers have since faced more consumer and debt-related legal issues as billing cycles and wage loss create a toxic personal financial environment for thousands of already vulnerable DC residents. With pandemic-related moratoria lifted, providers are addressing increased consumer and collections cases as community members begin to receive medical and collection bills; health care has become the country's largest source of debt in collections. These concerns are particularly acute for the undocumented, who have always been highly susceptible to exploitation and fraud. Six Initiative grantees partnered to establish the DC Debt Collection Hotline, which has already served thousands of residents, and, as cases continue to spike, is the phone number provided by DC Superior Court to litigants facing debt collection lawsuits.
- *Protecting wages and jobs.* These funds help teach low-income workers their rights, ensure they receive the wages they have earned and help them recover stolen wages, and fight discrimination and harassment. Unemployment in the District has always been high, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. Requests for legal assistance have clustered around unemployment insurance, terminations, and failures to pay wages or other benefits. Even before the pandemic, litigants in unemployment-related matters at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings were unrepresented by counsel 91% of the time.¹⁹ Specialized employment programs support working mothers within the District's immigrant community and those seeking assistance in applying for paid family leave benefits, and address discriminatory practices in the workplace in order to reduce income inequality and the racial income gap.
- *Promoting economic security.* Helping District residents secure benefits for which they are entitled has always been an important part of this program. Providers play a critical role in working with government agencies, such as the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health Care Finance, to ensure that benefit programs are accessible to the client community. There is a large gap in services for District residents navigating issues at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings, which hears cases relevant to vital public benefits such as unemployment insurance, TANF, SNAP, SSI and SSDI, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits – a gap that providers struggle to fill.²⁰

¹⁹ *Id.* at 210.

²⁰ *Id.*

- *Promoting education opportunities for youth at risk.* Initiative funds support legal services to parents and students to ensure that they are free from school exclusion and have access to a free and appropriate education, including special education and related services, language access, and other required supports to promote successful educational and life outcomes.
- *Re-entry support for returning citizens.* Several projects provide support to individuals transitioning back to the community after being detained in local or Federal juvenile, residential, or adult facilities through legal support in education, custody, employment, consumer, and post-incarceration issues.
- *Support to the District's growing immigrant population.* Initiative funds support legal help to combat notario fraud and protect unaccompanied minors and offer culturally specific legal services to targeted populations within the immigrant community.

The Initiative's Impact – Addressing Civil Legal Needs through the Access to Justice Grants Program

- ▶ 23,272 District residents received direct legal assistance in FY21 and another 14,760 in first six months of FY22 through the Access to Justice Grants Program.²¹
- ▶ 8,450 cases were accepted in FY21 and another 6,990 in the first six months of FY22.
- ▶ In 2021 and the first half of 2022, approximately 3,400 were served in Ward 1; 1,300 In Ward 2; 600 in Ward 3; 3,700 in Ward 4; 3,100 in Ward 5; 2,600 in Ward 6; 6,500 in Ward 7; and 6,200 in Ward 8.²²
- ▶ Access to Justice Grants Program grantees offered 307 community legal education events in FY21 and another 180 in the first six months of FY22.

Increased FY24 funding will support more robust evaluation, particularly in the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. Evaluation is a key component to the Initiative's success. The District's leadership and support allow the Initiative to incorporate strategic investments in learning, professional development, and evaluation that ensure continuous improvement of the work. Through its partnership with NPC Research,²³ DCBF continues to evaluate the impact of Initiative programs through tracking and assessing outcomes through client interviews; the impact of various forms of representation; the effectiveness of services; and how the work can make the District a more just, and racially equitable community. For example, a recent report from the Family Law Learning Network outlining participating grantees' capacity to use data to guide their work demonstrates the potential of such effort.²⁴ There, grantee organizations received training and technical assistance on collecting, analyzing and using data to bring a data-informed perspective to their work and planning. This culminated in two reports with recommendations on improving the civil justice experience for litigants in family law matters, including one that included responses from 189 litigants about their experience with virtual hearings and preferences for participation that was shared with the DC Superior Court.²⁵

²¹ Data on file with DC Bar Foundation

²² Data on file with DC Bar Foundation. (Some client Ward information was undetermined.)

²³ <https://npcresearch.com/>

²⁴ NPC Research, [DC Bar Foundation's Family Law Learning Network: Summary Report](#) (October 2022).

²⁵ NPC Research, [DC Bar Foundation's Family Law Learning Network: Litigant Perspectives on Remote Hearings in Family Law Cases](#) (December 2021).

Access to Justice Grants Program funds also ensure language access for those seeking legal help through the **Community Legal Interpreter Bank (“Bank”)**, a one-of-a-kind model operated by Ayuda that allows low-income residents who are limited English proficient or Deaf to access services from dozens of nonprofit legal services providers through the District. Language access has always been a priority due to the District’s diversity, but equity in accessing legal services became more critical during the pandemic when services were more difficult to access. Residents continue to receive interpretation over the phone and video, the Bank has provided special training to providers on holding interpreted meetings remotely, and the Bank has pivoted to holding interpreter trainings online. One provider said that the Bank has been “indispensable” in its outreach and community engagement efforts, allowing it to conduct ‘Know Your Rights’ trainings over Zoom using simultaneous interpretation. Interpretation over virtual platforms is more demanding and resource intensive. Ensuring that these virtual meetings and presentations go smoothly requires training of the interpreters and the legal services providers. In some instances, such as when an interpreted know your rights session will be recorded, interpreters are paid at a higher rate. We expect this to remain the case as these virtual practices continue.

The Initiative’s Impact – Language Access ²⁶

- ▶ In FY21, 13% of those served through the Access to Justice Grants program (or 3,078 of 23,272) were low-income District residents with limited or no English proficiency. That percentage grew to 18% (or 2,668 of 14,760) in the first six months of FY22.
- ▶ In FY21, the Community Legal Interpreter Bank fielded 7,778 requests for interpretation; translated 281 documents; and provided 2,328 hours of on-demand telephonic interpretation services. The top languages were Spanish, Amharic, and French.
- ▶ In the first six months of FY22, the Community Legal Interpreter Bank fielded 4,736 requests for interpretation; translated 270 documents; and provided 1,400 hours of on-demand telephonic interpretation services. The top languages were Spanish, Amharic, and French.

²⁶ Data on file with DC Bar Foundation

APPENDIX C: MAKING OUR LEGAL SYSTEM MORE ACCESSIBLE - COORDINATED INTAKE AND REFERRAL

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports strategies to make civil justice more accessible to District residents, including **Coordinated Intake and Referral**. No system works if it is not connected to the people who need it. For twenty years, our legal community has talked about developing a system that would make it easier for District residents to access help, without success. From a user perspective, solutions to problems – even if they are recognized as legal problems (and often they are not) – are not easy to find. There are countless phone calls, online or in-person intakes, shuffling from organization to organization to get help. Often those efforts are ultimately unsuccessful. With the dizzying array of organizations that offer help in the District, this quest can be even more daunting. For District residents to have a justice experience that meets them where they are and provides them the help they need, when and where they need it, we need a more coordinated, strategic approach.

DCBF is now leading an effort to do just that, with deep involvement in the design phase by many stakeholders. The vision is that for District residents, there will be ‘no wrong door’ to accessing help. In this vision, a District resident seeking help will have a single point of entry, where they’ll be connected with someone who will listen to their problems and connect them with curated resources that will address those problems and facilitate a connection with a legal services provider that may have the capacity to help. No other jurisdiction has attempted an approach at the scale DCBF contemplates for the District.

In August and September 2022, DCBF released two critical reports that will inform the design of our community's long-awaited system. The first report is based on client and community member focus groups, and the second report captures input on the system design from legal services providers, allied organizations, and individuals.²⁷

This effort to develop a coordinated intake and referral system is deeply connected to DCBF’s efforts to transform our civil legal aid network to involve other community partners who serve District residents. The success of the system will be fully realized only if District residents and the non-legal professionals who serve them know how to access it. While Initiative grantees often partner with non-legal community organizations in the District to serve DC residents more directly – medical-legal partnerships being a perfect example – this work needs to be expanded and appropriately resourced to be effective.

The District first provided dedicated funding to support this effort in FY23. For FY24, we are asking for \$1,500,000 to ensure the effort continues towards its implementation goal of 2024.

²⁷ NPC Research & DC Bar Foundation, [Designing a Coordinated Intake and Referral \(CIR\) System in the District of Columbia: Client and Community Member Input](#) (July 2022) and NPC Research & DC Bar Foundation, [Designing a Coordinated Intake and Referral \(CIR\) System in the District of Columbia: Input from Legal Services Providers and Allied Organizations](#) (August 2022).

APPENDIX D: RETAINING HIGH QUALITY, EXPERIENCED LAWYERS

The high quality of these services is dependent on the professionals who deliver them. A hallmark of the Initiative is DCBF’s investment in professional training and support to grantee organizations and their staff.

Since its inception, the **DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program (“DC LRAP”)** has served as a critical tool for recruiting and maintaining a talented, passionate, and diverse corps of legal services lawyers. The District has recently experienced growth in the need for and hiring of attorneys in the legal aid market. These professionals support residents facing a wide range of civil legal problems and other inequities in our legal system. With an average indebtedness of approximately \$200,000 and the average salary of enrolled participants at \$69,800, this benefit incentivizes attorneys to devote their skills to helping the District’s vulnerable population. To continue to support the work of attorneys in legal aid and deliver needed services to DC residents, we request LRAP funding of \$350,000 for FY24, level to FY23.²⁸

The Initiative’s Impact: Keeping Experienced, High Quality Lawyers in DC ²⁹

- ▶ 93 attorneys receive loan forgiveness from DCBF – 53 in the public LRAP program³⁰
- ▶ Recipients have an average salary of \$69,839
- ▶ Recipients face an average debt of \$200,000
- ▶ The average award is \$12,000

DCBF also provides support to these lawyers through trainings and technical assistance. DCBF sponsors multiple trainings each year and subsidizes the tuition fee for grantee staff to attend select legal skills trainings offered by other organizations in DC. DCBF also provides one-time funding for peer evaluations and consultants when grantees need technical assistance.

DCBF has invested additional resources in providing racial equity training to grantees, recognizing that civil justice is a racial equity imperative in a community like DC where communities of color disproportionately experience civil justice challenges. DCBF conducted a grantee diversity survey in April 2021 to collect demographic data on staff, leadership, and board compositions, knowing that advancing racial equity in the civil legal aid network means becoming as diverse as the community we serve. Now in its fifth year, DCBF has continued to offer grantees a four-part training series on racial equity and racial justice facilitated by the organization Service Never Sleeps³¹ and launched a five-part training series in partnership with the Interaction Institute for Social Change³² to build grantee staff capacity to design and facilitate productive conversations about race, racism, and racial justice. DCBF is also working with grantees to design a Racial Equity Learning Network.³³

²⁸ This is equal to the recurring funding of \$350,000 appropriated to LRAP in FY23. Another \$600,000 in local, one-time funds appropriated to LRAP in FY23 support a one-time investment in repaying loan principal or interest of those applicants whose loans would not otherwise be eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

²⁹ Data on file with DC Bar Foundation

³⁰ DCBF manages two loan repayment programs, a public program funded with Initiative dollars that supports poverty lawyers who live in DC and another, private program funded privately that supports poverty lawyers who live outside of DC in the neighboring jurisdictions. Learn more at <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/lrap>

³¹ <https://serviceneversleeps.org/>

³² <https://interactioninstitute.org/>

³³ You can learn more about DCBF’s efforts in this area at <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/post/our-racial-equity-journey>.

APPENDIX E: NEW AND EXPANDED SUPPORT IN FY22 AND FY23

The District expanded support to the Initiative in FY22 and FY23. This additional support allowed for expanded and new services in eviction defense, prevention, and diversion. The support also allowed DCBF to increase existing funding to other already successful projects and provide new funding to projects that address other unmet needs. Additional funding was made possible through Federal pandemic and local one-time support; support that the Initiative is not slated to receive in FY24.³⁴ It is critical that the District identify local, recurring funding to replace those one-time funds so that the Initiative can continue to support the important work currently done by grantees.

Some examples of expanded or new projects the Initiative was able to support with additional FY22 and FY23 funding include:

- *Eviction and housing-related support.* Increases in eviction defense, eviction-prevention and diversion services – including the new, intensive outreach efforts described earlier. There also is funding to support services to those experiencing homelessness to provide holistic, legal support to address issues ranging from public benefits, estate planning and probate, housing, and record sealing.
- *Keeping individuals and families safe.* Increased support to provide “one stop” holistic services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in areas like civil protection orders, custody, divorce, child support, public benefits, immigration, criminal justice advocacy, and identity documentation. This includes a significant increase for a program providing culturally specific, trauma-informed services to Black women and girls in Wards 7 and 8, and another increase in trauma-informed services to survivors of sexual exploitation.
- *Promoting family stability.* Expanded support for legal advocacy for children at the center of child custody disputes, where the severity and complexity of family dysfunction has grown significantly. Several new programs provide culturally specific legal support and representation to low-income, Black mothers and relative caregivers experiencing family instability. In addition, funding supports a new, coordinated approach to serving court-involved families with custody, child support, visitation, and other domestic relations cases through the Family Law Assistance Network.
- *Managing health crises.* New support for addressing the unmet legal needs of pregnant and postpartum people receiving care at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, where attorneys are placed on-site at the hospital to provide streamlined access to services.
- *Assisting seniors aging in place.* Long-needed increase in the availability of support for older District residents in probate and estate planning – support that is essential to maintaining Black homeownership and intergenerational stability – plus expansion of public benefits support to aging District residents.
- *Stabilizing credit to low-income residents and helping protect critically needed funds.* A significant increase in debt-related legal services to help DC residents in debt collection and other consumer cases, including legal and financial counseling in credit-related matters, protections for victims of scams, economic abuse and identity theft, and new funding for a project providing direct representation, education, and outreach to individuals with disabilities experiencing consumer protection and debt-related problems.

³⁴ The sources of the Initiative’s FY23 appropriation include \$15,589,000 in local recurring funds and \$16,100,000 in a combination of Federal and local one-time funds.

- *Promoting economic security.* More help for District residents facing multi-layered economic insecurity issues, addressing access to public benefits, barriers to employment based on criminal records and background checks, unfair debt collection, and discrimination – including community offices targeting economic security in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Also, new support for the growing number of District residents whose income makes them ineligible for services from legal services providers yet are unable to afford a private attorney (and are still considered low-income per DCBF funding eligibility requirements).
- *Re-entry support for returning citizens.* New legal and other support for women returning from incarceration in issues like expungement, name change, probation issues, child support, child custody, consumer issues, and more.
- *Support to the District's growing immigrant population.* More support for the District's growing immigrant population, including several new and expanded programs providing culturally specific support to immigrants from Central and South America, West and Central Africa and Ethiopia, those who have experienced torture, individuals with co-occurring issues of domestic violence, and unaccompanied immigrant children. In addition, expanded, language-accessible services to combat fraud targeting the District's immigrant population.

APPENDIX F: THE INITIATIVE'S ROLE IN ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEED

Despite the District's significant investment in the Initiative over time, the community need for these critical, free legal services continues to outpace available resources. The District's historic investments in FY22 and FY23 allowed DCBF to expand necessary interventions, and with the \$37.85M in support requested for FY24, we can continue to work to get closer to meeting the demand for legal help and address persistent gaps in legal services delivery.

There is no doubt that the civil justice crisis the District faced before the pandemic has grown. Our *Delivering Justice* report³⁵ described the civil justice crisis facing the District before the pandemic. Initiative grantees report that requests for help have increased, with vulnerable populations like District elders, those living with disabilities, and the immigrant population particularly susceptible to legal risk. This is borne out by what we are seeing in our courts, with increases in areas like domestic violence and probate, and a surge in cases that were tolled during the pandemic, like evictions, debt collection and mortgage foreclosures. Even cases that have not grown in number have demanded greater capacity to service them, with hearing preparation and participation taking longer in the virtual context. The pandemic has created a new 'normal' whereby legal services providers are serving clients simultaneously in both remote and in-person environments. Additional funding is needed to support the increased staffing necessary to satisfy these operational demands. There is a continued need for legal services as new legislation takes effect. DC's low-income residents may not be aware of the legislation, their rights within it, or know how to navigate the systems designed to implement the law.

Here are some snapshots of needs identified by Initiative grantees:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great.* The most recently available data shows that rates of litigants appearing in court without a lawyer are as high as 75-97% in DC Courts and at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings.
 - For example, case filings in domestic relations matters increased by 42% in 2021, suggesting a growing need for legal services to help litigants address both new and ongoing unresolved family law matters. The Family Law Assistance Network received 1,774 referrals for help from its launch in March 2020 through August 25, 2022, and that is likely only a fraction of DC residents who will need help since court activities during this time period were significantly curtailed, with fewer litigants accessing Family Court. The circumstances that create family instability have been aggravated by the rising cost of living and a heightened affordable housing crisis in the District, putting stress on DC families living below the poverty line. This disproportionately impacts the District's Black families, who have faced both higher levels of unemployment, as well as caregiver loss due to disproportionate COVID-19 cases and deaths.³⁶

³⁵ D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Delivering Justice*, *supra* note 17.

³⁶With higher rates of infection, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 among Black DC residents, more Black children have experienced family instability or lost their parent/caregiver to COVID-19. Though Black residents make up 45% of DC's population, Black residents have made up 72% of COVID deaths and a 2021 study confirmed that Black children in DC have disproportionately experienced the loss of a parent/caregiver due to COVID-19. As a result, providers are experiencing a surge in referrals for family stability cases to serve children who are at-risk of entering the foster care system. See Dan Treglia, JJ Cutuli, Kamyar Arasteh, John Bridgeland, *Parental and Other Caregiver Loss Due to COVID-19 in the United States: Prevalence by Race, State, Relationship, and Child Age*, J. Community Health 2022 Dec 14 at 1-8, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36515763/>; KFF, *COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Current Data and Changes Over Time* (August 22, 2022) available at <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time/>.

- *Evictions continue to rise.* A variety of factors suggest an increase in demand for eviction defense and diversion services as Federal rental assistance funds are expended and pandemic-related legal protections have expired:
 - According to U.S. Census data, 42,496 of those DC adults in rental housing surveyed reported being behind in rent and 9,729 reported it was “very” or “somewhat” likely that they’ll have to leave their house within 2 months due to eviction - the vast majority of whom are District residents of color.³⁷ 39% (or 16,376) of those behind in rent are 4 months behind (with 60% of those individuals 4 months or more behind in rent).³⁸
 - Eviction disproportionately impacts the District’s low-income communities of color. According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, nearly two-thirds of extremely low-income DC families pay half or more of their limited cash income towards rent.³⁹
 - The National Low Income Housing Coalition ranked DC as the fifth most expensive jurisdiction in the nation with regard to wages required to afford rental housing.⁴⁰ Fair market rent for a 2 bedroom apartment is \$1,785 and the income necessary to afford this rent without experiencing rental cost burden is \$5,950/month. In contrast, the median household income among Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program clients is \$939/month.⁴¹ A minimum wage worker would have to work 85 work hours per week at minimum wage to afford an apartment at this rate.⁴²

- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need.*
 - One domestic violence organization handled 53% more legal matters the first 6 months of 2022 than in the same period in 2019.
 - DC SAFE experienced 86,549 calls to their Crisis Response Line – the source of a majority of Initiative grantee referrals for Civil Protection Orders – between March 1, 2020 and April 30, 2022.
 - In 2021, one organization co-counseled with a record breaking 450+ volunteer attorneys who donated over 35,000 hours of legal services to meet the needs of their clients.

³⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey (Week 52: December 9 to December 19), *Table 1b: Last Month’s Payment Status for Renter Occupied Housing Units* (published January 5, 2023) available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp52.html>.

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey (Week 52: December 9 to December 19), *Table 3b: Likelihood of Having to Leave this House in Next 2 Months Due to Eviction* (published January 5, 2023) available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp52.html>.

³⁹ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, *DC Affordable Housing Toolbox* (April 2019) available at <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/dcs-affordable-housing-toolbox/>

⁴⁰ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach* (2022) available at https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/DC_2022_OOR.pdf

⁴¹ NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) (October 2022)* at 6.

⁴² NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) (October 2022)* at 6.

- *Changes in the law and new protections available to District residents require legal support.* District residents navigating new legal terrain will need help in understanding and vindicating new rights.
 - In December 2020, the DC Council passed the Intrafamily Offenses and Anti-Stalking Orders Amendment Act of 2020, which created Anti-Stalking Orders (ASOs) litigated in the Domestic Violence Division of the DC Superior Court. Since December 2021, when the new law came into effect, Initiative programs have received numerous inquiries from respondents and others seeking assistance navigating the ASO process. There are few accessible resources online that explain the ASO process.
 - With the expiration of DC's pandemic era debt collection moratorium, the DC Council enacted a major overhaul of DC's debt collection law that became permanent on January 1, 2023. The new law provides new rights both in litigation and outside of litigation, with important protections against harassment, excessive contacts, and other coercive tactics by debt collectors. Legal services providers expect a flood of new debt collection cases after years of limited action by debt collectors, and District residents facing them will need legal support to understand and leverage these new protections.
 - The local Earned Income Tax Credit expansions passed by the DC Council in the FY 2022 budget and subsequent stand-alone legislation in 2022, for tax year 2022, will lead to increased need for legal services for people who are eligible for this benefit. According to a study by the Social Policy Institute, only 50 percent of eligible DC families⁴³ received the expanded federal child tax credit this past year.
 - A provider has experienced an approximately 65% increase in the number of DC residents it provided legal assistance to in education-related matters compared to the same time period the prior year. Approximately 50% of new matters involved suspension, expulsion, or schools' improper use of involuntary transfers to circumvent the Student Fair Access to School Act of 2018 (SFASA), which require schools to provide a hearing for disciplinary exclusions of 6 days or longer.
- *Other Needs:*
 - A report issued jointly by the Council for Court Excellence and the D.C. Access to Justice Commission calls on the legal and philanthropic community to expand support for legal services in probate and estate administration among other reforms.⁴⁴
 - Between FY15 and FY21, the Office of Refugee Resettlement released an average of 248 Unaccompanied Immigrant Children per year to sponsors living in Washington, DC. In the first nine months of FY 2022 alone (October 2021 - June 2022), Washington, DC has already received 336 unaccompanied children,⁴⁵ indicating a continued growth trend.

These are just a few reasons why Initiative grantees report an increasing and more complex level of community need for civil legal help, **and underscores the need to approve our FY24 budget request of \$37.85M.**

⁴³ <https://socialpolicyinstitute.wustl.edu/items/state-by-state-analysis/>

⁴⁴ [Council for Court Excellence and D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Strengthening Probate Administration in the District of Columbia* \(February 2022\).](#)

⁴⁵ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>