



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Perinatal LAW

The Perinatal Legal Assistance & Well-being (P-LAW) project promotes the health of pregnant and postpartum patients through legal advocacy at MedStar Women's & Infants' Services (WIS). Since January 2022, ACCESS TO JUSTICE (ATJ) funding has contributed to P-LAW's efforts to address some of the most critical unmet legal needs of WIS patients and their families.

The District, like much of the nation, is experiencing a Black maternal and infant mortality and morbidity crisis.

Between 2014 and 2018, Black birthing people accounted for approximately half of all births in DC but represented nearly all pregnancy-related deaths. (Maternal Mortality Review Commission). Black babies born in the District are 3x more likely to die than White babies in their first year of life (DC Health 2018). Many of the variables that perpetuate these disparities (e.g., issues related to housing, employment, public benefits, etc.) cannot be overcome without a lawyer's help. **ATJ funding has allowed P-LAW to increase its capacity to use the law as a tool to address legal issues that impede the health of pregnant and postpartum patients. In the process, many patients also learn more about their legal rights and increase their self-advocacy skills.**

ATJ supports innovative lawyering models like P-LAW that leverage the trusted relationships people have with their healthcare providers to identify and address unmet legal needs before they become crises. **In the last 15 months, ATJ funding has enabled P-LAW's to service 155 pregnant & postpartum clients on 226 legal issues, & achieve positive financial outcomes of nearly \$200,000.** Addressing legal needs early can avoid higher economic, social, physical, & other costs to patients & systems.



WITH SEVERE HYPEREMESIS (NAUSEA & VOMITING) DURING MY PREGNANCY I WAS UNABLE TO WORK. WITH P-LAW'S HELP I SUCCESSFULLY APPLIED FOR SHORT TERM DISABILITY OF \$1900 PER MONTH. THE LAWYER EVEN HELPED ME RECOVER \$4100 IN BACKPAY. AFTER THAT, I WAS ABLE TO PRIORITIZE MY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, AFFORD MY RENT, CARE FOR MY MINOR CHILD, AND PURCHASE NEEDED BABY ITEMS. - FORMER P-LAW CLIENT

WIS DEMOGRAPHICS

4	# of Common Maternal Morbidities (preterm delivery; gestational diabetes, hypertension, and preeclampsia) experienced at rates well above the national average
> 50%	Live in Wards 5, 7, & 8
85%	Black
95%	Have Public Health Insurance (the national average is 51%)

As Covid-19 related protections and supports continue to expire, eviction cases, lapses in the receipt of critical income supports, and discriminatory practices are likely to increase. **Without continued ATJ funds, P-LAW would need to reduce staffing by at least 50%; significantly decreasing P-LAW's capacity to provide legal services to pregnant and postpartum patients.**