

THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

ACCESSING JUSTICE in D.C.



Restore Funding of \$31.7M for the Access to Justice Initiative

The proposed FY25 budget cuts the Access to Justice Initiative by 67% (or \$21.211M) to \$10.457M. This cut will eliminate access to critically needed legal services and put the safety, health, housing, and economic stability of the District community at risk. We urge the D.C. Council to restore FY24 funding of \$31.7M to ensure these vital services continue.

The Access to Justice Initiative Promotes Community Stability



Initiative Programs

- 30+ Initiative grantees **keep DC residents in their homes, promote public safety and community stability, and further economic security**
- Initiative programs address life's fundamentals: **the roof over your head** (*evictions and foreclosures, housing conditions*); **family stability** (*child custody, child support, education, guardianship, immigration*); **personal safety** (*protection against abuse*); and **financial security** (*public benefits, debt, bankruptcy*)
- A **legal interpreter bank** ensures linguistically accessible legal services are available
- **Loan repayment** helps committed legal services lawyers stay working in and living in DC



Snapshot of its Impact

- The Initiative served **almost 40,000 DC residents** in 2023
- The legal interpreter bank provided more than **7,500 telephonic interpretations to 35 organizations in 2023** and declined additional requests due to under-funding
- Legal assistance from Initiative grantees in eviction cases led to **76% of tenants retaining possession** of their unit in 2023
- Initiative programs promote a **more racially equitable community**: most Initiative grants target Wards 5, 7 & 8 which are majority-Black
- A medical legal partnership that receives Initiative funding found its legal services helped **avoid \$14.1M in Medicaid costs** over three years



Essential services are at risk

- The proposed budget cut would force **deep staffing cuts** and **greatly reduce the number of District residents helped**.
- Putting these services in jeopardy will have **devastating consequences** for District residents.
- This cut will **reverse progress fostered by the Council** since the Initiative's inception, including new programs, strategic coordination between providers, and community-led and -based interventions.
- Current funding still fails to meet the **continued high demand for legal help** in housing, domestic violence, family law, immigration, probate, public benefits, & consumer protection. One provider reported receiving its highest number of requests for legal help in a decade this year.

FY25 funding of \$31.7M would provide \$20.35M for a wide range of civil legal services (including \$3M for eviction diversion and \$1M for a coordinated system to streamline legal referrals); \$11M for eviction-related legal services; and \$350,000 for loan repayment assistance to DC legal services attorneys