



December 19, 2025

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The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: FY27 Access to Justice Initiative Budget Request

Dear Mayor Bowser,

The **Access to Justice Initiative** promotes community stability and strength by leveraging legal support to keep D.C. families safe, housed, and financially secure. Our local government is recognized as a national access-to-justice leader because of its over 20-year investment in making civil legal help available to its residents. **Thank you.**

We respectfully request that you approve our FY27 budget request of \$32 million, comparable to the Initiative's final budget appropriation in each of the last four years (FY23-FY26). As described further in our supporting materials, this includes \$20.65 million for the *Access to Justice Grants Program*, \$11 million for the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*, and \$350,000 for the *D.C. Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program*.

At this uncertain time in the District's history, sustained funding is essential to ensure that increasingly vulnerable D.C. residents continue to receive critical constituent services from more than 30 Initiative-funded nonprofit organizations that address problems that put the safety, stability, homes, health, and economic well-being of District families and communities at risk. Many of these problems cannot be solved without legal help, making the Initiative uniquely essential. While we believe that a request for level funding is the appropriate approach in the current fiscal environment, we feel compelled to note that the pressure of increased operating costs on grantee organizations, combined with a growing community need that vastly surpasses capacity, would justify an increased appropriation – **which underscores why maintaining level funding is so important.**

Here is why the Initiative works.

The Initiative *further* neighborhood and family stability by helping tenants and landlords resolve their differences without resorting to the costly and harmful eviction process: **85% of recent cases were resolved without a judgment of eviction.**

The Initiative *promotes public safety and community well-being* by addressing the root causes of community challenges, decreasing individual, family, and community stress to promote more stable and resilient neighborhoods across all eight Wards: **Said one client, "The victimization I experienced bled over to my family, friends, and neighbors. Let me assure you, the threats to the victim can quickly become problems to the community. Without the legal aid and literal handholding, I'm not sure where I'd be today."** In just one example, the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN) provided legal help to 98.5% of the over 5,600 referrals it has received since it launched in 2000.

The Initiative is a good investment, *advancing economic opportunity* with financial rewards to individuals and the broader D.C. community: **This includes nearly \$1 million in the pockets of over 1,000 District families facing debt and consumer issues, thousands of dollars in recouped public benefits, community savings like \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided by keeping children out of hospitals, and leveraged resources like free legal support offered by private law firms to District residents only made possible with legal services involvement.**

Finally, the District's investment in the Initiative *promotes good government*: it is a **critical constituent service** for District families who need legal help and legal information; it **promotes efficiency** through collaborative projects that ease access to the legal system; and it **facilitates strategic partnerships** between Initiative grantees and over 200 local government agencies and community-based non-profits.

As you said during an event celebrating the work of the DC Bar Foundation: "*Affording [District residents] the legal representation and assistance they need is fundamental to upholding our D.C. values.*" Thank you for your continued partnership with the Commission and the DC Bar Foundation to advance our shared vision for a strong District community.

Sincerely,



Peter B. Edelman, Chair



James J. Sandman, Vice Chair

cc: Ms. Lindsey Parker, Senior Advisor
Mr. Tomás Talamante, Chief of Staff
Mr. Kevin Donahue, City Administrator
Ms. Betsy Cavendish, General Counsel
Ms. Jennifer Reed, Director, Office of Budget and Performance Management
Ms. Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice
Ms. Jennifer Porter, Director, Office of Victim Services & Justice Grants
Mr. Eugene Adams, Director, Mayor's Office of Legal Counsel

Ms. Kirra Jarratt, Chief Executive Officer, DC Bar Foundation
Mr. Ron Flagg, President, DC Bar Foundation Board of Directors
Ms. Nancy Drane, Executive Director, D.C. Access to Justice Commission

FY27 PUBLIC FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE

For 20 years, the Access to Justice Initiative (“Initiative”) has been the District’s primary vehicle to ensure that District residents otherwise unable to afford it have access to civil justice through free legal help. The Initiative promotes neighborhood and family stability, public safety and community well-being, and economic opportunity for individuals and the community. District residents, including families, elders, and individuals with disabilities, rely on the Initiative’s critical constituent services. The District’s strategic approach to ensuring resident access to civil justice is a model for the nation. The Initiative currently falls within the purview of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (“OVSJG”) and by statute, has been administered by the DC Bar Foundation (“DCBF”) since its inception in 2007.

FUNDING REQUEST

The D.C. Access to Justice Commission¹ requests that the District fund the Initiative at \$32 million in FY27, comparable to its final budget appropriation in each of the last four years (FY23-FY26).² We request local, recurring funding to replace any local, one-time support that was appropriated in FY26.³ The request breaks down as follows:

- **\$20.65 million for the Access to Justice Grants Program.** This program may support several efforts including: *access to justice grants* to maintain current support for civil legal services in communities of highly concentrated poverty; expand representation in housing matters; and maintain a legal interpreter bank; efforts targeted at *preventing eviction filings*; maintenance of a *coordinated intake and referral system* to improve District residents’ access to legal services; and an effort to bring nonprofit, government, court, and other stakeholders together to consolidate and streamline *community access to legal information*. Funds also support investments in data and evaluation to better measure the benefits, impact, and effectiveness of funded projects in meeting community needs.
- **\$11 million for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program.** This program funds legal help in eviction-related proceedings to individuals and families at risk of eviction and housing instability, plus continued program evaluation and assessment.
- **\$350,000 for the D.C. Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program.** This program assists lawyers who have committed to serving low-income District residents with student loan debt which helps nonprofit organizations recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse, and experienced pool of legal aid attorneys to deliver needed services to D.C. residents.

¹ Created by the DC Court of Appeals in 2005, the Commission addresses civil justice barriers experienced by low- and moderate-income D.C. residents and includes judges and 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/>. Commissioner Karen Newton Cole, Executive Director of Neighborhood Legal Services Program, recused herself from this submission due to Legal Services Corporation regulations.

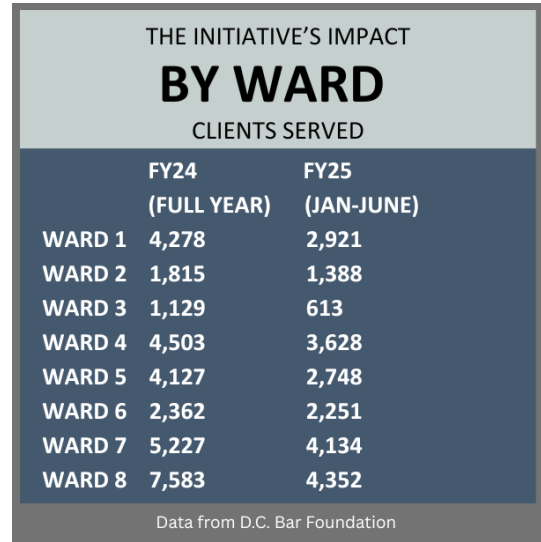
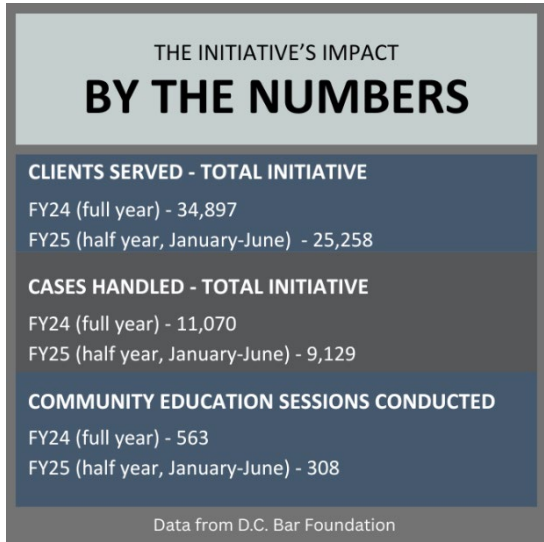
² The FY26 [Local Budget Act](#) reads, “... provided, that \$31,785,256 shall be made available to award a grant to the District of Columbia Bar Foundation for the purpose of administering the Access to Justice Initiative, including the Access to Justice Grants Program, the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program, and the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program; provided further, that the funds authorized for expenditure for the Access to Justice Initiative shall remain available for expenditure, without regard to fiscal year, until September 30, 2026.”

³ The sources of the Initiative’s FY26 appropriation include approximately \$6,225,137 in local recurring funds and approximately \$25,560,119 in local one-time funds. (The final FY25 appropriation included \$10,457,256 in recurring funds. However, the [OVSJG chapter of the Mayor’s proposed FY26 budget](#) explained that approximately \$4,232,119 of these recurring funds were converted to one-time funds. The Mayor’s budget office subsequently stated that it anticipated that these one-time funds would be converted back to recurring funds in the FY27 formulation, which would be our hope.)

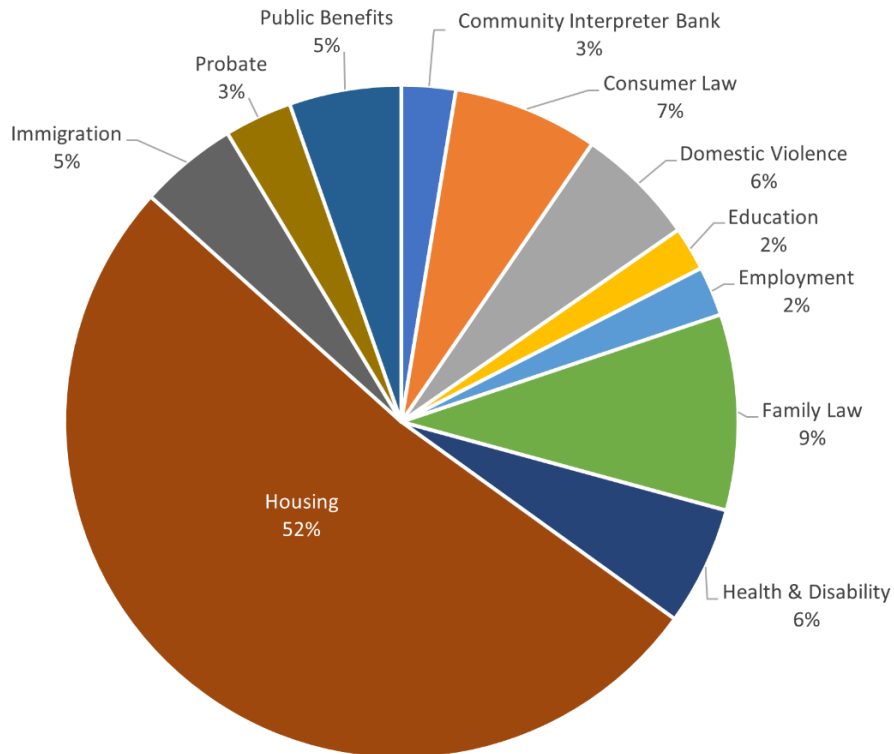
ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

BY THE NUMBERS

This data demonstrates the Initiative’s breadth, the community reliance on it across all eight⁴ D.C. wards, and the growing need presented:



An important benefit of the Initiative is its ability to fund legal help with the wide range of civil legal problems experienced by District residents, as reflected in the distribution of its FY25 grants:



⁴ The ward identification is unknown for an additional 3,873 clients served in FY24 and an additional 3,223 clients served in the first half of FY25.

PROMOTING NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY STABILITY

Initiative funds support a continuum of housing strategies:

- Through the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*, Initiative-funded organizations provide legal help to individuals and families facing eviction in D.C. Courts and in other eviction-related matters. Data demonstrates the power of the program to keep D.C. families safely and stably housed:
 - 85% of recently closed cases were resolved *outside of court* via dismissal by the court (15%), by the landlord (39%), or through a settlement between the parties (31%).⁵
 - Legal help *stabilizes particularly vulnerable families*, with recent client households including children (41%) or individuals with disabilities or a chronic health condition (29%) with almost half at risk of losing a housing subsidy (44%).⁶
 - Overall, CLCPP has helped 13,621 tenants and handled 17,116 cases since its inception.⁷
 - Over those years and where outcomes are known, tenants retained possession in 76% of cases⁸ and retained housing choice vouchers in 79% of cases.⁹
- Additional funding made available through the *Access to Justice Grants Program* supports other activities aimed at *preventing* evictions:
 - In FY24 and the first half of FY25 there were over 6,100 knocks on doors aimed at preventing eviction. A companion program operated by grantee organizations, the Housing Right to Counsel pro bono project, has sent over 6,000 outreach letters to those facing eviction.¹⁰
 - Tenant Empowerment Specialists help clients apply for rental assistance and public benefits, facilitate voucher transfers, and work closely with emergency rental assistance providers to assist clients facing imminent eviction.
 - In FY24 and the first half of FY25, over 5,400 individuals attended over 350 community education sessions on housing offered by funded organizations to learn how best to maintain their housing.
- The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports other housing-related projects that keep D.C. residents stably housed in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.

Our FY27 funding request includes funding to support eviction-related representation through the CLCPP program and additional funding through the Access to Justice Grants program to support eviction prevention efforts and other housing work. To learn more about the Initiative's housing strategies, see "Appendix A: Promoting Neighborhood and Community Stability."

PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The Initiative supports a wide range of legal organizations that promote public safety, address family instability, and improve community well-being through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. Left unaddressed, these issues make our community vulnerable to crises. Instead, successful legal intervention promotes community resiliency and stability. Examples of this life-changing work include:

⁵ D.C. Bar Foundation 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 Evaluation (January 1, 2025 through June 30, 2025)* (September 2025) at v.

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

⁷ *Id.* at 2.

⁸ *Id.* at 34.

⁹ *Id.* at 36.

¹⁰ Data provided by DC Bar Foundation.

- *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.
- *Specialized support for individuals with disabilities*, including ensuring safe and healthy environments and combatting discrimination.
- *Assisting seniors aging in place* with estate and end-of-life planning, public benefits support, combatting fraud and abuse, and safekeeping intergenerational transfer of property.
- *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, and identify legal remedies to health problems like asthma – often by providing specialized services through medical-legal partnerships with health systems.
- *Promoting education opportunities for youth* 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 prevent recidivism and promote public safety* by helping them transition back to the community after incarceration and navigate legal challenges in education, custody, employment, and consumer protection – including expungement, where studies show those who have had their criminal records expunged are less likely to recidivate and more likely to receive higher future wages.
- *Supporting the District’s 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.

Our FY27 funding request includes funding for the Access to Justice Grants program to support a wide range of projects, including those that promote public safety and community well-being. To learn more about this funded work, see “Appendix B: Promoting Public Safety and Community Well-Being.”

PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Initiative-funded organizations also lessen economic risk and inopportunity and promote community well-being and stability through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. Examples include:

- *Stabilizing credit for low- and moderate-income residents and protecting critically needed funds* by fighting predatory lending and illegal debt collection schemes and averting negative court judgments and credit reports, including focused efforts in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8.
- *Protecting wages and jobs* by helping District residents recover stolen wages, fight discrimination and harassment, and seek assistance from employment-related organizations.
- *Promoting economic security and lessening government burdens* by ensuring D.C. residents secure benefits for which they are entitled through advocacy and legal representation involving unemployment, TANF, SNAP, SSI, SSDI, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits.
- *Preserving intergenerational homes and wealth* through heirs property and probate-related work.
- *Offering services to individuals experiencing homelessness* to gain access to housing, employment, and other benefits.

- *Reducing health-related costs* by addressing health-harming problems that can be resolved through legal solutions.

Our FY27 funding request includes funding for the Access to Justice Grants program to support a wide range of projects, including those that promote economic security. To learn more about these strategies, see “Appendix C: Promoting Economic Security for Individuals and the Community.”

MAKING LEGAL HELP MORE ACCESSIBLE

The Initiative also supports a wide range of strategic approaches to strengthen community access to legal help:

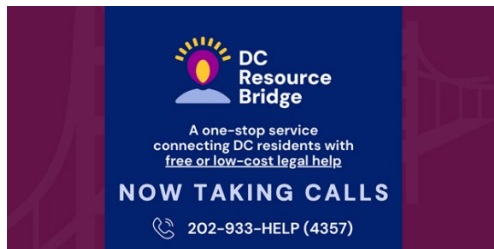
Supporting Language Access

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also funds the Community Legal Interpreter Bank, a one-of-a-kind model operated by Ayuda since the Initiative’s beginnings that promotes equal access to justice by enabling low-income residents who are limited English proficient or Deaf to access legal help with the support of professionals specially trained in legal language interpretation. The Bank offers dedicated support to 36 nonprofit legal organizations to ensure services are provided in the client’s native language, with the most common languages being Spanish, Amharic, and French. Providers describe the Bank as an “indispensable” partner in outreach and community engagement efforts, including making possible ‘Know Your Rights’ trainings over Zoom using interpreters specially trained in simultaneous interpretation:

- In FY24, 33% of those served through the Initiative (or 11,687 of 34,897), including the interpreter bank, were low-income District residents with limited or no English proficiency. In the first half of FY25, that percentage was 28% (or 7,092 of 25,258).
- 7,316 telephone interpretations were offered in FY24 and another 5,340 in the first half of FY25.
- Community education and other documents are offered in multiple languages to promote client understanding, with 317 documents translated in FY24 and another 84 in the first half of FY25.

No Wrong Door for Seeking Legal Help

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also reduces barriers that District residents face in accessing legal information and legal help, a vital constituent service. The Initiative’s interest in this work reflects a recognition that it is critical that District residents have access to a continuum of legal services that fit their scope of need, spanning from access to high quality legal information to full legal representation.



This includes a coordinated intake and referral system, known as [DC Resource Bridge](#), where there is ‘no wrong door’ for District residents to access legal help. Instead of being forced to contact multiple organizations, D.C. residents seeking help now have a single point of entry where they connect with someone who will listen to their problems and connect them with a legal services provider. Hosted by Legal Aid DC, the DC

Resource Bridge has launched and is accepting referrals in certain types of civil legal cases, with expansion to all areas of civil legal aid forthcoming. It also includes a [directory of legal services organizations](#) that will be kept up to date for the public. DC Bar Foundation’s leadership as the Initiative administrator has been key to the project coming to fruition,¹¹ and is deeply connected to DCBF’s efforts to transform our civil legal aid network by engaging other community partners who serve District residents. Having a coordinated intake and referral system will also benefit social services, government, and other professionals who are often in the position of trying to connect individuals with legal help.

¹¹ For more on the DC Bar Foundation’s efforts to develop the D.C. Resource Bridge, see <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/dcrb>.

Ensuring the Availability of Legal Information

We also recognize the importance of efforts to ensure District residents have access to high quality and accurate legal information. FY27 funding may support efforts to consolidate and streamline community access to legal information, building on the Commission's September 2024 report, [Justice for All: Report on Self-Help in the District of Columbia and Recommendations for a More Efficient and Coordinated Future](#).¹² The Commission's report detailed its three-year effort to inventory and assess existing legal information in the District, finding that it was often outdated, inaccurate, too complicated for the average District resident to understand, and hard to find. The Commission recommended that the District invest in improving our community approach to maintaining legal information by pursuing a model, based on successes in other jurisdictions, that would increase efficiency and accessibility of legal information for individuals and non-legal professionals in the District. The Commission's report contains a roadmap for nonprofit, government, court, and other stakeholders to use to launch this model in the District. This will aid D.C. residents and a wide range of other professionals who often seek reliable legal information.

Network Building

Finally, the DC Bar Foundation has led efforts to bring together the District's community of helpers through the [D.C. Social Justice Transformations Network](#) – legal aid, funders, community activists, health and social services, allied partners, academia, government, philanthropy, media, banking, faith-based, arts, business, and other leaders. Through convenings and ongoing projects, the network effort¹³ promotes the idea that key District stakeholders can work together to ensure the legal aid system in D.C. is accessible and seamless for all clients.

With a civil justice system as complex as the District's, these approaches are desperately needed.

RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED, EXPERIENCED LAWYERS TO SERVE DISTRICT RESIDENTS

The high quality of these legal services is dependent on the professionals who deliver them. The *D.C. Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program* ("D.C. LRAP") is a critical tool for maintaining a high quality, diverse corps of legal services lawyers. This program currently enables 87 attorneys from 25 legal services organizations to devote their skills to helping District low-income residents. Thirty-nine percent of these lawyers come from DC-area law schools. Loan repayment assistance helps legal services employers recruit and retain high-quality, experienced staff. This is critical when legal services salaries in D.C. are currently significantly below market (an average of \$63,931 among enrolled participants at all experience levels) compared with their government or private sector peers (with entry-level salaries for first-year associates at D.C. private law firms as high as \$225,000¹⁴). The average indebtedness of LRAP participants is \$153,582.¹⁵

Another hallmark of the Initiative is DCBF's investment in professional training and support to Initiative-funded organizations and their staff through trainings and technical assistance. DCBF sponsors multiple trainings each year and subsidizes the tuition fee for Initiative-funded organizational staff to attend legal skills trainings offered by other organizations. It is also supporting organizations in strategic efforts to collaborate and develop additional efficiencies to collectively leverage their resources to serve clients.

Our FY27 funding request includes funding to support loan repayment for D.C.'s legal services attorneys.

¹² D.C. Access to Justice Commission, [Justice for All: Report on Self-Help in the District of Columbia and Recommendations for a More Efficient and Coordinated Future](#) (September 2024).

¹³ For more on the DC Bar Foundation's Social Justice Transformations Network, see <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/dc-social-justice-transformations-network>

¹⁴ NALP's most recent Associate Salary Survey ([June 2025](#)) shows that at least half of the offices in Washington, D.C. now offer a \$225,000 starting salary. Contrast this \$64,000 average for legal services attorneys.

¹⁵ Data provided by DC Bar Foundation.

MEETING THE GROWING NEED FOR LEGAL HELP

Despite the District’s growing investment in the Initiative over time, the community need for these critical, free legal services continues to outpace available resources. Rising poverty, uncertainty surrounding local and federal benefit programs, and persistent inequalities in the District continue to create challenges that often require significant legal help to address:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great*, with 75-97% of litigants in D.C. Courts and at the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings without legal representation.¹⁶
- *Community needs are increasing*. Legal services providers are reporting increases in client intakes as high as 73% greater than in past years in some legal areas.¹⁷
- *Eviction remains at crisis level*. The total number of evictions is projected to hit a seven-year high in 2025¹⁸ and calls for eviction-related legal help received by Initiative funded programs exceeded 7,300 in the last year and a half alone.¹⁹
- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need*. With high rates of D.C. residents having experienced domestic violence, cases have continued to rise. One domestic violence provider reports a 10% increase in clinic-based consultations in 2025.²⁰ D.C. SAFE – a frequent referral source for Initiative-funded organizations – experienced 23,569 calls to their Crisis Response Line and made 16,285 unique referrals in FY25.²¹
- *Economic stressors persist*. On top of regional fiscal uncertainty, credit defaults, which are typically a predictor of debt collection volume, are at a 14-year high, with balances at serious risk of default at levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis.²² One local provider reported more calls in 2025 over the previous year.²³ Poverty and unemployment have increased in the last year, with the overall poverty rate estimated to have increased to 17.3% (30.5% for Black residents).²⁴ D.C. had the highest unemployment rate by state in the most recent available data from August 2025.²⁵ This financial strain creates unmet legal needs and increases the number of residents eligible for Initiative-funded legal services.
- *Family conflict often requires legal intervention*. Stable families lead to stable communities, but thousands of District residents face a wide range of family-related needs that require legal support. In D.C.’s Family Court, 83-93% of litigants lack counsel. The Initiative-funded Family Law Assistance Network (“FLAN”) has fielded over 5,600 referrals from individuals seeking help since its inception in 2020. FLAN has offered legal help to 98.5% of those 5,600 referrals. Over 1/3 of cases originate from FLAN’s court-based help center.

¹⁶ [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.

¹⁷ Data provided by Legal Aid DC.

¹⁸ Yuliya Panfil, Jeff Reichman, Sabiha Zainulbhai, and Helen Bonnyman, [An Analysis of DC Eviction Filings: June Through October 2025](#), New America (November 17, 2025).

¹⁹ See *supra* note 5 at 2.

²⁰ Data provided by Volunteer Legal Advocates.

²¹ *DC SAFE FY25 by the Numbers*, available at <https://www.dcsafe.org/financials-reports>.

²² Hugh Cameron, [Millions of Americans Are Defaulting on Loans](#), Newsweek (November 24, 2025).

²³ Data provided by Tzedek DC.

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, [ACS 2024 1-Year Estimates](#) (published Sept 2025).

²⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, [State Employment and Unemployment — August 2025](#).

- *Protecting intergenerational wealth in D.C. families.* The ability to navigate the probate system can mean the difference between keeping a multigenerational home in D.C. or losing it and being forced to leave the community. As the Bowser administration has recognized, a lack of legal support in probate matters (as high as 97% in some cases) has been a long-standing civil justice gap, even with several new Initiative projects.

A more detailed description of this growing community need is in *“Appendix D: The Initiative’s Role in Addressing Community Need.”*

**APPROVING OUR FY27 BUDGET REQUEST IS NEEDED TO ENSURE
INITIATIVE-FUNDED LEGAL HELP CONTINUES TO BE AVAILABLE**

The Initiative increases access to justice by expanding the capacity and reach of organizations to address District residents’ legal needs through a range of services to help with problems that have long challenged District residents. The Initiative’s unique structure promotes efficiency as it positions funded organizations to partner and promote collective learning, adopt consistent and effective best practices, and pursue economy of scale. Continued support will allow Initiative-funded organizations to multiply successful interventions and develop new ones when the need is more profound than ever.

DCBF is committed to ensuring that funded organizations continue to effectively serve District residents. The Initiative incorporates strategic investments in learning, professional development, and evaluation that ensure continuous improvement of the work. Through its partnership with NPC Research,²⁶ DCBF continues to evaluate the impact of Initiative-funded legal help through tracking and assessing outcomes through client interviews, the impact of various forms of representation, and the effectiveness of services.²⁷ Initiative-funded organizations receive training and technical assistance on collecting, analyzing, and using data to bring a data-informed perspective to their work and planning.²⁸

Sustained funding is essential. Cuts to the Initiative will result in thousands fewer clients served, loss of staff, and the elimination of some funded programs entirely. A reduction of support for civil legal services organizations could also squander the availability of external resources that are leveraged by the Initiative, like pro bono service by private lawyers who rely on the support of legal services staff to take on case representations – one organization facilitated \$20M worth of free legal services to low-income District residents through its pro bono program;²⁹ another organization leverages every dollar raised overall to generate \$25 of free legal services from the private bar.³⁰

There is no higher function of government than to ensure that all its residents, no matter their economic status, have equal access to justice. Mayor Bowser and the D.C. Council have embraced this most fundamental of obligations through their support of the Initiative. We respectfully request that the Mayor approve our FY27 request of \$32 million to support work that directly improves the lives of thousands of District residents.

²⁶ <https://npcresearch.com/>

²⁷ DC Bar Foundation and NPC Research, [DCBF’s Family Law Learning Network: Summary Report](#) (October 2022).

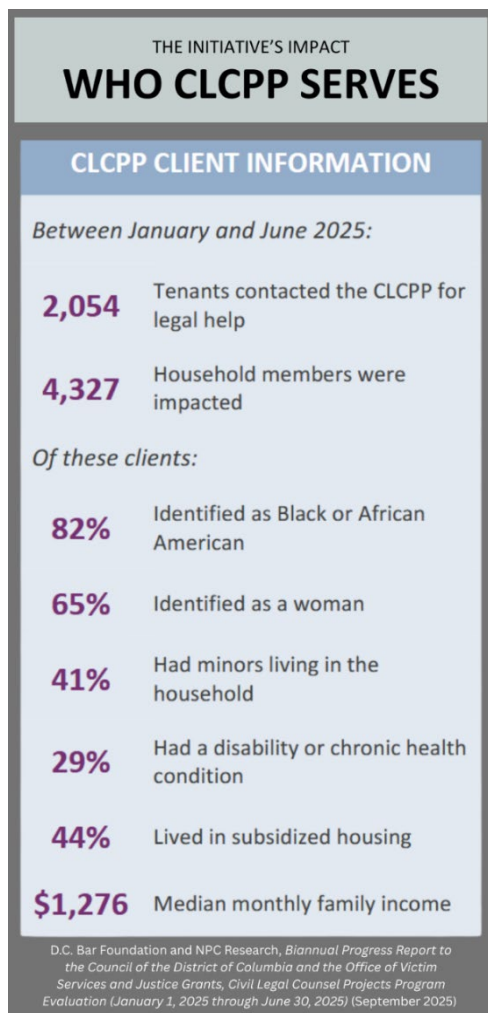
²⁸ DC Bar Foundation and NPC Research, [DCBF’s Family Law Learning Network: Litiqant Perspectives on Remote Hearings in Family Law Cases](#) (December 2021).

²⁹ Data provided by Volunteer Legal Advocates.

³⁰ Data provided by Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

APPENDIX A: PROMOTING NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY STABILITY

Initiative funds support a continuum of strategies that promote neighborhood and community stability by keeping District families safely housed. The *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* provides legal representation to individuals and families facing eviction matters in D.C. Courts and in other eviction-related proceedings; the *Access to Justice Grants Program* supports additional *prevention-based strategies* aimed at stopping eviction filings from occurring and supports other housing-related projects aimed at keeping District families in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.



The need for continued support to preserve housing stability is as critical as ever. Almost 84,000 District rental households are considered housing-cost burdened because they spend thirty percent or more of income on rent; almost 46,000 District rental households are “severely” housing-cost burdened because they spend half or more of their income on rent.³¹

Twelve percent of District residents (or 82,452) (and one in five children³²) are experiencing housing insecurity, meaning housing unaffordability, inadequate housing, or frequent and unwanted moves – with that burden largely falling on families, children, and youth; Black and Hispanic residents; and Ward 7 and 8 residents.³³ In its annual *Out of Reach* report, the National Low Income Housing Coalition ranked D.C. as the fifth most expensive jurisdiction in the nation for rental housing, with the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment at \$2,314 and monthly income necessary to afford it without experiencing rental cost burden at \$7,713.³⁴ In contrast, the median household monthly income among CLCPP clients served is \$1,276,³⁵ with the vast majority of clients considered rent burdened (82%) or severely rent burdened (64%).³⁶

With these vulnerabilities in mind, we seek funding for the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* (“CLCPP”) to continue to ensure District tenants facing eviction have the legal help they need to maintain their affordable housing.³⁷

³¹ See *supra* note 24; see also Connor Zielinski and Mychal Cohen, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [Nearly Half of All Renters and More Than Half of Black Renters in DC Struggle to Afford Rent](#) (April 14, 2025).

³² *Id.*

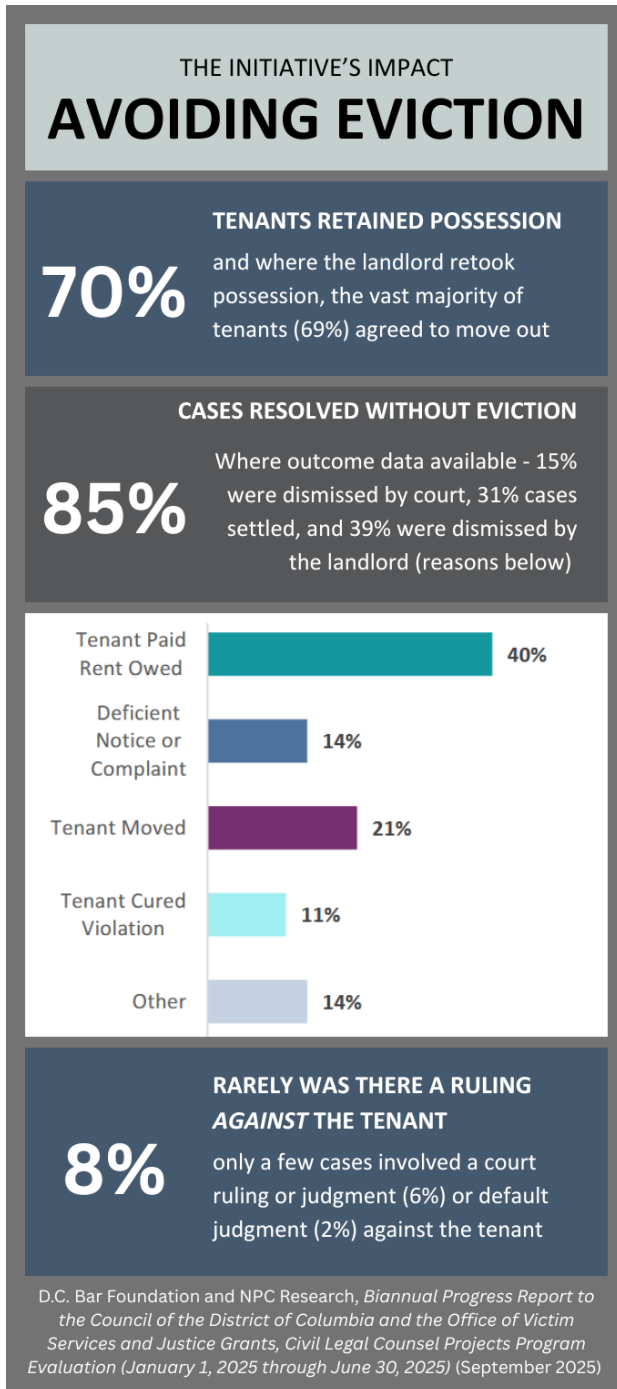
³³ Claudia D. Solari, Lydia Lo, Alavi Rashid, Lynden Bond, Urban Institute, [Housing Insecurity in the District of Columbia](#) (November 16, 2023).

³⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition, [Out of Reach: District of Columbia](#) (last visited December 2, 2025).

³⁵ See *supra* note 5 at 3.

³⁶ *Id.* at 4.

³⁷ A range of relevant reports is available at <https://www.dbarfoundation.org/reports>. 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 \(August 22, 2022, updated December 9, 2022\)](#).



CLCPP-funded organizations work together to develop successful strategies to help District residents avoid eviction.

They jointly maintain the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (“LTLAN”), a coordinated and accessible telephone-based intake and referral system for low-income litigants to connect with legal help. Funded organizations ensure LTLAN information is widely available through partnerships with community organizations and in mailed court documents about upcoming hearings. LTLAN has fielded over 7,300 calls from tenants and small landlords seeking help in the last year and a half.³⁸ In the first half of 2025, 70% of clients reached CLCPP organizations through LTLAN (41%) or called a funded organization directly (29%).³⁹

CLCPP-funded organizations have a regular presence in court hearings to connect with unrepresented tenants to offer services, including remote hearings. CLCPP-funded organizations participate in D.C. Superior Court’s Landlord Tenant Working Group, its Landlord Tenant Rules Committee, and other working groups to provide recommendations on process improvements. Judicial officers find CLCPP’s role instrumental in the administration of justice.

To leverage funds effectively, CLCPP organizations train and refer cases to pro bono attorneys for representation – over 1,000 cases in the last year and a half⁴⁰ – and host a five-part eviction law training and courthouse tours.⁴¹

Robust data collection for the CLCPP program began in August 2019. From then through June 2025, CLCPP-funded organizations handled 17,116 total cases for tenants who presented for services, providing legal assistance to 13,621 low-income D.C. residents.⁴²

The *Access to Justice Grants Program’s* additional investment in *eviction prevention* allows DCBF and Initiative-funded organizations to also pursue prevention-based strategies to halt evictions, including more directly involving non-legal, community-based organizations as partners. Our FY27 request includes funding to support eviction prevention efforts that will allow Initiative-funded organizations to continue

³⁸ See *supra* note 5 at 2.

³⁹ *Id.* at 5.

⁴⁰ Data provided by DC Bar Foundation. (586 cases were placed with pro bono attorneys in FY24 and another 543 in the first half of FY25.)

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

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.



Initiative-funded organizations work to identify tenants at risk of eviction by requesting and tracking data on pre-court notices, 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.

Initiative-funded organizations ensure tenants are aware of ways to avoid eviction, critical when tenants often misunderstand relevant rules and renter protections that apply to them. This outreach includes holding outreach sessions with tenant associations, organizers, and other community service organizations; holding pop up events on-site at buildings; and using social media and community partners to educate the public. Initiative-funded organizations participate in training and outreach events held by other organizations, including Housing Counseling Services, Latino Economic Development Center, D.C. Public Libraries, D.C. Public Schools Early Childhood program, local hospitals, and various school groups.

Initiative-funded organizations approach this work holistically, also working to connect District residents with related support that could help them become stably housed, such as disability, unemployment, and financial planning if facing long-term financial issues; and help with issues that may affect housing stability, such as deep cleaning and hoarding therapy intervention. Initiative-funded organizations were able to hire staff whose duties include connecting tenants to services that will help them remain stably housed.

DCBF co-leads the D.C. 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-funded organizations participate in 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 legal organizations and community-based canvassers, and more engagement with housing providers and tenants alike before landlords file eviction actions.

Finally, securing affordable housing goes beyond eviction prevention. FY27 support for the *Access to Justice Grants Program* will support numerous other housing strategies Initiative-funded organizations employ to keep District residents in safe, healthy housing, such as:

- helping tenants facing environmental health hazards and unsafe housing conditions secure health-saving improvements from landlords through individual and building-wide advocacy;
- fostering continued, intergenerational communities by keeping families in their homes through work in foreclosure and estate administration;
- safeguarding low-equity housing cooperatives, tenant organizations, and other groups that keep District residents in their homes;
- supporting fair housing and combatting housing-based discrimination;

- keeping tenants in their housing by combatting illegal rent increases and unlawful voucher terminations; and
- working with individuals experiencing homelessness to provide holistic, legal support to address issues like access to public benefits, estate planning and probate, housing, and record sealing.

THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

HEALTHIER HOMES

ATTACKING HEALTH DISPARITIES
Children with asthma in Wards 7 and 8 are 20 times more likely to end up in the ER for asthma than a child growing up in Ward 3

LEGAL INTERVENTIONS MEAN HEALTHIER CHILDREN
Children's health improves – sometimes within days – after the conditions are addressed.

COMBATTING HOUSING CODE VIOLATIONS
Mold, lead, and vermin exacerbate asthma and lead to emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS ARE CLEAR
A legal intervention, alongside medical treatment, keeps children out of the hospital and emergency room and results in significant Medicaid cost avoidance – on average \$10,000 in the first 18 months alone after a housing conditions case is initiated

Children's Law Center

APPENDIX B: PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The Initiative supports a wide range of funded projects at legal organizations that are specifically targeted to promote public safety, address family instability, and improve community well-being through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. Left unaddressed, these issues make our community vulnerable to crises. Instead, successful intervention promotes community resiliency and stability. Some examples of the ways the program promotes public safety and community well-being include:

- *Keeping individuals and families safe.* Initiative-funded organizations offer trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in all eight Wards. Initiative-funded organizations have mobilized to offer support in the form of emergency legal services and crisis safety planning and launched new and expanded virtual and in-person clinics to meet the growing need. Court-based services are essential when the most recently available data⁴³ show that 88% of petitioners in domestic violence matters seeking civil protection orders lack counsel. Specialized services support survivors of sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and victims of crime.
- *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.
- *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 Latino 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.
- *Promoting family stability.* The Initiative supports a wide range of projects at funded organizations that promote family stability. At least three projects 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. Initiative-funded organizations partner with the D.C. Child & Family Services Agency (CFSA) in their effort to establish a new 211 Warmline prevention program, which is intended to increase families' early access to health and human services to build stability, well-being, and resilience, therefore preventing child abuse and neglect.
- *Minimizing family conflict.* Initiative-funded organizations provide representation to District residents trying to resolve family conflict in the D.C. Superior Court. For example, one project is aimed at providing specialized, trauma-informed support to children involved in custody disputes identified as being in critical need of representation. Representation of parents and primary caregivers with child support issues is also provided, notable where 80-97% of litigants traditionally pursue these cases without legal help.⁴⁴ A third of referrals to the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN) come from its in-person walk-in center at D.C. Superior Court to serve clients directly, critical where 83-93% of litigants lack counsel. The Initiative-funded Family Law

⁴³ See *supra* note 16.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

Assistance Network (“FLAN”) has fielded over 5,600 referrals from individuals seeking help since its inception in 2020. FLAN has offered legal help to 98.5% of those 5,600 referrals.

- *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, cancer patients, and other special populations. Legal services providers continue to help low-income D.C. 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. [Click HERE](#) for a client testimonial on the impact of legal help on her health.
- *Promoting education opportunities for youth.* 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. Other services specifically target court-involved youth or youth at risk of court involvement.
- *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. Projects at funded organizations also offer support in expungement and record sealing. A 2020 study found that there is a significantly lower recidivism rate among those who have their criminal records expunged. The study also found “sharp upturns” in wage and employment trajectories for those who obtained expungement relief, finding that “on average, within one year of expungement wages go up by over 22% versus the pre-expungement trajectory.”⁴⁵
- *Support to the District’s immigrant population.* Initiative funds support legal help to combat *notario* fraud, protect unaccompanied minors, and offer culturally specific legal services to targeted populations within the immigrant community.

⁴⁵ Prescott, J., Starr, S., [Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study](#), Harvard Law Review, 133, no. 8 (2020) at 2460-2555.

APPENDIX C: PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Projects at Initiative-funded organizations also lessen economic risk and inopportunity and promote community well-being and stability through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. This is a critical intervention where the District saw an alarming number of these consumer problems before the pandemic, and District residents 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 D.C. residents. Scams have also become more sophisticated with the rise of AI.

- *Stabilizing credit for low-income residents and helping protect critically needed funds.* Projects at funded organizations 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 – including focused community efforts in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8. They also seek to avert or minimize the extraction of wealth from D.C. residents by debt collectors, which occurs disproportionately against Black and Latino D.C. residents.
- *Coordinated legal help.* Six Initiative-funded organizations partnered to establish the D.C. Debt Collection Hotline, which has already served thousands of residents, and, as cases continue to spike, is the phone number provided by D.C. Superior Court to litigants facing debt collection lawsuits. One funded organization kept a total of nearly \$1 million in the pockets of over 1,000 District families facing debt and consumer issues last year.
- *Protecting wages and jobs.* Initiative-funded organizations 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. Litigants in unemployment-related matters at the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings are unrepresented by counsel 91% of the time.⁴⁶ Specialized employment projects at funded organizations support working mothers and those seeking assistance in applying for paid family leave benefits and address discriminatory practices in the workplace to reduce income inequality.
- *Preserving intergenerational homes though heirs property and other probate-related work.* The District has prioritized maintaining and growing homeownership among longtime District residents. The ability to navigate the probate system can mean the difference between keeping a multigenerational home in D.C. or losing it and being forced to leave the community. A lack of legal support in probate matters (as high as 97% in some cases) has been a long-standing civil justice gap, but a growing number of Initiative projects offer support in this area.
- *Promoting economic security.* Helping District residents secure benefits for which they are entitled has always been an important part of the Initiative. Providers play a critical role in working with government agencies like DHS and the DHCF to ensure that public benefit programs are accessible to the client community. There is a large gap in services for District residents

THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

ECONOMIC IMPACT

PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL SECURITY

One funded organization kept nearly \$1 million in the pockets of over 1,000 D.C. families facing debt & consumer issues last year.

BENEFITS SECURED

Another organization reported that the equivalent of just under 2.5 lawyers secured over \$850,000 in vital public benefits for its clients.

MEDICAID SAVINGS FOR THE COMMUNITY

One grantee tracked its impact and found that community savings include \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided over three years by keeping children out of hospitals and emergency rooms.

Sources: Tzedek DC, Bread for the City, Children's Law Center

⁴⁶ See *supra* note 16, at 210.

navigating issues at the D.C. OAH, which hears cases relevant to vital public benefits such as unemployment insurance, TANF, SNAP, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits – a gap that providers struggle to fill.⁴⁷ The equivalent of just under 2.5 lawyers at one funded organization secured more than \$850,000 in vital public benefits for their clients. The Initiative also supports services to those experiencing homelessness to provide holistic, legal support to address issues ranging from public benefits, estate planning, probate, housing, and record sealing.

- *Reducing health-related costs* by addressing health-harming problems that can be resolved through legal solutions. For example, projects at funded organizations help District families address housing code violations or other environmental health hazards that often exacerbate medical conditions like asthma. One Initiative-funded organization tracked its impact and found that community savings include \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided over three years by keeping children out of hospitals and emergency rooms.
- *Identifying financial support for health-beneficial investments* where one Initiative-funded organization helped secure \$20 million in federal funds in 2024 to upgrade more than 700 units across six properties in the District to reduce asthma triggers and improve air quality – both securing direct and immediate benefits for residents will also likely further reduce health-related costs for the District.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ [Auzinea Bacon, D.C. nonprofits to upgrade air quality in 700 multifamily homes](#), Washington Business Journal (August 2, 2024).

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

The District's investments have allowed DCBF to expand necessary interventions to *get closer* to meeting the demand for legal help and address persistent gaps in legal services delivery – *but there is no doubt* that even an appropriation at funding level to FY26 will leave thousands of District residents needing help unserved. **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 Commission's *Delivering Justice* report⁴⁹ described the District's persistent civil justice crisis. Initiative-funded organizations report that requests for help continue to increase, with vulnerable populations like District elders, children, and those living with disabilities particularly susceptible to legal risk. Even cases that have not grown in number demand greater capacity to service them, with hearing preparation and participation taking longer and matters becoming more complex due to frequent statutory and practice-based changes and the need to serve clients simultaneously in both remote and in-person environments.

Here are some snapshots of needs identified by Initiative-funded organizations:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great.* The most recently available data shows that rates of litigants in civil proceedings appearing in court without a lawyer are as high as 75-97% in D.C. Courts and at the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings.⁵⁰
- *Community needs are increasing.* The largest provider of general legal services in D.C. reports increases in client intakes across the organization in 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, including a 34% increase in calls to its general intake line and a 29% increase in online intakes. It has also seen increases in consumer cases (18%), housing (13%), immigration (56%), and child support (73%). It reports that on-site intakes at the D.C. Courts in eviction have similarly grown by 42%. Referrals from other organizations looking for help for their clients increased by 57%.⁵¹
- *Eviction remains at crisis level.*
 - A recent report projected that 12,565 District households will be subject to an eviction filing in 2025 and the total number of completed evictions will be around 2,031, which would be a seven-year high. Wards 5, 7, and 8 have a disproportionately large share of eviction filings.⁵²
 - Almost 84,000 District rental households are “housing-cost burdened” because they spend thirty percent or more of income on rent; almost 46,000 are “severely” housing-cost burdened because they spend half or more of their income on rent.⁵³ (These numbers are up from last year's assessments.)
 - Twelve percent of District residents (or 82,452) are experiencing housing insecurity, meaning housing unaffordability, inadequate housing, or frequent and unwanted moves – with that burden largely falling on families, children, and youth; Black and Latino residents, and Ward 7 and 8 residents.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ See *supra* note 16.

⁵⁰ *Id.* A summary of representation rates in D.C. Courts and the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings is available at https://dcaccesstojustice.org/reports_extra.html.

⁵¹ Data provided by Legal Aid DC.

⁵² See *supra* note 18.

⁵³ See *supra* note 24.

⁵⁴ See *supra* note 34.

- Applications for the District’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) – a critical tool for helping District tenants at the greatest risk – reopened on November 20, 2025 for the first time in a year (when all funds were exhausted within 6 hours). As of 1:22 p.m. on that day, the program had paused making new appointments.⁵⁵
- In its annual *Out of Reach* report, the National Low Income Housing Coalition ranked D.C. as the fifth most expensive jurisdiction in the nation regarding rental housing wages, with the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in D.C. at \$2,314 and monthly income necessary to afford this rent without experiencing rental cost burden at \$7,713.⁵⁶ In contrast, the median monthly household income among CLCPP clients is \$1,276.⁵⁷
- There were over 7,300 calls to the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network in 2024 and the first half of 2025.⁵⁸
- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need.*
 - 47% of women and 43% of men in DC have experienced intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence and/or stalking in their lifetimes⁵⁹ – and cases have continued to rise, not letting up on the surge providers saw during the height of the pandemic. The District’s and the nation’s current economic strain presents new, exacerbating pressures.
 - One domestic violence provider saw a 10% increase in in-person clinic consultations.⁶⁰
 - D.C. SAFE – the source of most referrals for civil protection orders received by Initiative-funded organizations – experienced 35,464 calls to their Crisis Response Line and made 16,635 unique referrals in FY25.⁶¹
- *Economic stressors persist.*
 - The District is experiencing an unprecedented period of economic uncertainty as federal layoffs and cuts to safety net programs like SNAP and Medicaid increase risk for low-income residents – at a time when the poverty rate rose for the first time in years.⁶²
 - Poverty and unemployment have increased in the last year – with the overall poverty rate estimated to have increased to 17.3% (30.5% for Black residents).⁶³ The District had the highest unemployment rate by state in the most recent available data from August 2025.⁶⁴ This financial strain creates unmet legal needs as well as increases the number of residents eligible for legal services funded by the Initiative.
 - One organization reported an increase in requests for consumer debt legal help over the previous year.⁶⁵ More District residents were also seeking help with bankruptcy. Across

⁵⁵ Thomas Mates, Phylcia Ashley, Christian Flores, [Phone problems, long lines mar DC Emergency Rental Assistance registration](#), WJLA (November 20, 2025).

⁵⁶ See *supra* note 35.

⁵⁷ See *supra* note 5 at 3.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ [D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#), citing Sharon G. Smith et al, [The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey \(NISVS\): 2016/2017 State Report, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023](#), Tables 5.3 (Page 74) and 5.4 (page 86).

⁶⁰ Data provided by Volunteer Lawyer Advocates.

⁶¹ See *supra* note 21.

⁶² See *supra* note 32.

⁶³ See *supra* note 24.

⁶⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, [State Employment and Unemployment — August 2025](#).

⁶⁵ Data provided by Tzedek DC.

Wards 7 and 8, 78% of low-income residents are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs with half having delinquent debt and little reported savings.⁶⁶

- Credit defaults, which are typically a predictor of debt collection volume, are at a 14-year high,⁶⁷ with cases having more complex litigation needs to realize current protections.
- Projects at funded organizations offer financial literacy programs to District residents to protect income and asset security, particularly District youth. This is critical, as the most recent Nation's Report Card on Financial Literacy gave D.C. an "F," placing it in the lowest 20 percent of the country (primarily because financial literacy is not readily available in traditional educational settings).⁶⁸
- D.C.'s foreclosure rate is above the U.S. average - worse than most, even large, states.⁶⁹
- *Family conflict often requires legal intervention.*
 - In D.C.'s Family Court, 83-93% of litigants lack counsel.
 - The Initiative-funded Family Law Assistance Network has fielded over 5,600 calls from District residents seeking this type of assistance since its inception in 2020. FLAN was able to offer help in 98.5% of these referrals. A third of referrals originate from FLAN's court-based help center.
- *Probate-related needs continue.*
 - 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.⁷⁰ This includes end-of-life planning to ensure the economic viability of intergenerational families.
 - Recent funding facilitated the creation of a new coordinated effort, the Probate Legal Assistance Network, which has streamlined access to these critical services.
- *District residents require help navigating critical government programs and benefits.*
 - More clients with disabilities seeking help with supported decision-making and recovering stolen benefits.
 - There is a consistent and growing need for legal help in securing appropriate special education services and education access for students at-risk and with disabilities, especially older youth – and ensuring that these students have access to the District's range of school choice options.
 - With Medicaid recertification and Medicaid-funded services under renewed scrutiny, District residents with health needs require help addressing errors and litigating factual disputes on the necessity of services. Litigants appealing public benefits decisions at the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings are unrepresented 86% of the time.
 - D.C. residents facing increasing challenges in securing access to Social Security benefits.

These are just a few reasons why Initiative-funded organizations report an increasing and more complex level of community need for civil legal help and underscores the need to approve our FY27 budget request of \$32M.

⁶⁶ Miranda Santillo, Mingli Zhong, Oriya Cohen, Urban Institute, [Washington, DC, Has Glaring Financial Health Inequities. So Do Most American Cities](#) (October 6, 2022).

⁶⁷ Adriana Morga, [Here's what you need to know about credit card defaults](#), Associated Press (January 9, 2025).

⁶⁸ American Public Education Foundation, [The Nation's Report Card of Financial Literacy](#) (2023-2024).

⁶⁹ The Mortgage Report, <https://themortgagereports.com/119090/foreclosure-filings-grow-first-quarter-2025-2>

⁷⁰ Council for Court Excellence and D.C. Access to Justice Commission, [Strengthening Probate Administration in the District of Columbia](#) (February 2022).