

# THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE

D.C. Council's 20-year investment to prioritize access to legal help



**FY27**

The D.C. Council recognized that legal help leads to better individual and community outcomes and stronger neighborhoods when it created the Initiative 20 years ago. Unaddressed civil legal problems make our community vulnerable to crisis and less safe. Initiative programs address family safety and instability, support youth, protect survivors of crime, serve returning citizens, and address core individual needs. With the Initiative's help, D.C. communities are stronger and more resilient.

**44,000+** - District residents who received Access to Justice Initiative-funded problem-solving solutions that work last year.

The Initiative is a highly effective program that offers legal help in ten distinct legal areas like domestic violence, public benefits, probate, family law, education, health and disability, employment, consumer protection, housing, and more.

**\$7 to \$1** - The Initiative is a good investment that generates economic benefits and cost savings to District residents, businesses, and the government.

National studies show a \$7 to \$1 return on investment in civil legal aid. The Initiative lessens economic risk and inopportunity by supporting D.C. workers, addresses debt-related legal crises, promotes financial literacy, prevents government burdens that result from unsolved legal problems, reduces health costs, and leverages existing resources.

**85% Cases Resolved** - The Initiative promotes housing stability & maintains affordable housing by helping to resolve disputes and avoid eviction

Initiative programs help address problems that put District residents' housing at risk like preserving inter-generational homes, avoiding foreclosure, preventing eviction through negotiated agreements between landlords and tenants that resolve the vast majority of Initiative-involved cases, and preserving subsidies to keep housing economically viable.

**30+ Nonprofits with 180+ Partners** - The Initiative is a uniquely essential and deeply embedded community resource.

No other D.C. program addresses such a wide range of problems that require legal help to be solved. Last year, staff at 30+ nonprofit organizations partnered with 180+ District agencies and community partners to serve more clients than ever before.

**\$31.785M** - The Initiative must be maintained to ensure critical services continue.

The Council must make restoring the Access to Justice Initiative a top FY27 priority. The proposed 86% or \$27M reduction would be devastating to vulnerable District residents.

<https://dcaccesstojustice.org/access-public-funding/> & <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/grant-programs>