



# Annual Report 2022

# Moving Forward With Resolve

The Legal Aid Society handles hundreds of thousands of legal matters, but we measure our impact in terms of the more than 1.5 million vulnerable New Yorkers served by that work. We represent clients across many different areas of the law, giving us an up-close view of New Yorkers' day-to-day challenges, how they are impacted by laws and policies, and their interactions with city and state agencies. We leverage this unique perspective in combination with impact litigation and advocacy to dismantle oppressive systems and to help build new systems that uplift marginalized communities.



## | OUR MISSION

### Delivering Justice in Every Borough

The Legal Aid Society is built on one simple but powerful belief: that no New Yorker should be denied the right to equal justice. We seek to be a beacon of hope for New Yorkers who feel neglected—regardless of who they are, where they come from, or how they identify. From our start over 145 years ago, our growth has mirrored that of the city we serve. Today, we are proud to be the largest, most influential social justice law firm in New York City.

Our staff and attorneys deliver justice in every borough, working tirelessly to defend our clients and dismantle the hidden, systemic barriers that can prevent them from thriving. As passionate advocates for individuals and families, The Legal Aid Society is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of our City.

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# Our Leadership

| OUR LEADERSHIP

## Report of the Attorney-in-Chief



It was truly an honor to be named the Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer of The Legal Aid Society this year, as it serves low-income people at such a critical juncture for our city. We are grappling with a host of issues, ranging from criminal defense to tenant rights, and access to justice for young people. More than ever, vulnerable New Yorkers need our services, and I look forward to further positioning the organization to strengthen its core direct services, policy advocacy, an impact litigation work.

I am a public defender to my core. I've dedicated my entire professional career to serving marginalized and disenfranchised communities, and I view my work here at The Legal Aid Society as an extension of that effort. We have taken an active role in ensuring New York City complies with right to shelter laws as thousands of migrants were bused to the city from southern states. We continued our fight against the ongoing humanitarian crisis in City jails. And we engaged with the City as it announced a plan to end youth homelessness.

I'm the daughter of Black and Chinese parents, and I truly value being part of an institution with such diverse organizational and board leadership. As I have visited our offices across the five boroughs over the last few months, I have also found myself incredibly proud to be part of a dynamic team of driven attorneys and supporting staff who show me, every day, what can be achieved through leadership, compassion, and a deep commitment to justice.

At a time, however, that our staff is contending with surging caseloads, they are grappling with the same economic pain – high inflation, soaring housing costs, rising prices for food, gas, and other expenses – that afflicts our clients. Some of our attorneys and staff can only make their monthly budget by taking on second jobs, and would in fact be eligible for our services if the need somehow arose. At the same time that the City seeks to expand mandated legal services, it has not provided adequate funding to account for the increased costs faced by public defenders. Without additional significant investment from the

City, legal services organizations have had to leave open positions unfilled, and delay essential investments critical to the delivery of their services to clients. The current administration must recognize we are a part of the legal system too, and when the scales of justice tilt towards one side, people suffer.

Despite these obstacles, our passionate and dedicated workforce is still achieving remarkable results with fewer resources. Over the past year, The Legal Aid Society handled over 183,000 individual legal matters and 31,000 helpline calls, a 25% and 41% increase, respectively, over the previous year.

As we face direct attacks on our reproductive, voting, and immigrant rights, we find ourselves as a country in the civil rights movement of my lifetime. But The Legal Aid Society is up to the challenge, and, as always, we will work together to protect all New Yorkers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Twyla Carter".

**Twyla Carter**  
Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer

| OUR LEADERSHIP

## Report of the Chair & President of the Board

Last year, the Board of Directors set forth as its top priority finding a worthy successor to Janet Sabel as Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer, and we are proud to say we have more than achieved that goal. Following an extensive search over the last year, which included feedback gathered from internal advisory groups, town halls, focus groups, and surveys, we welcomed in August Twyla Carter, a prominent member of the national public defense and civil rights community, to take the reins of The Legal Aid Society. We are thrilled that Twyla, the first Black and Asian American woman to lead the organization, will help position it to meet the challenges that face our clients and the communities we serve.

The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases, for more clients who are unable to afford it, than any other legal services or public defender organization in the country. And under Twyla's watch, we have already seen The Legal Aid Society tackle a myriad of issues impacting our most vulnerable neighbors as the city slowly climbs out of the pandemic economic decline. In only four months' time, the organization has continued its campaign to keep roofs over people's heads, pressured the City to ensure that young people and migrants are sheltered properly, and continued to hold the City accountable for human rights violations in its jails.



Twyla is also taking a lead in our efforts to help steer the organization towards a sustainable future. At a time when salaries for New York City prosecutors exceed those of public defenders by about \$20,000 annually, we are demanding pay parity with City employees with whom we engage as partners or adversaries. In Twyla's meetings with City officials and council members, and drawing upon Zachary's experience as a leading government attorney and judge, we will continue to push for organizational funding fairness, to ensure our critical work extends beyond our constitutionally mandated representation.

As our new Board President, Alan will also leverage his years of work ensuring equal justice on behalf of marginalized people, which includes representing plaintiffs injured by white supremacists at the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, as the challenge persists of providing life-altering pro bono assistance to thousands of clients and their families.

We arrive here today on the cusp of a new chapter in the history of The Legal Aid Society, filled with excitement and resolve to resume our work with a new leader who deeply believes in our mission of ensuring all New Yorkers have access to equal justice.

**Alan Levine**  
President of the Board of Directors

**Zachary W. Carter**  
Chair of the Board of Directors

# Leadership

Leaders of The Legal Aid Society are some of the most respected in their fields, offering decades of experience and perspective gained from dedicating their careers to ensuring equal justice.

**Twyla Carter**

Attorney-in-Chief  
and Chief Executive Officer

**Adriene Holder**

Chief Attorney,  
Civil Practice

**Tina Luongo**

Chief Attorney,  
Criminal Defense Practice

**Dawne Mitchell**

Chief Attorney,  
Juvenile Rights Practice

**Scott Rosenberg**

Secretary and General Counsel

**Lauren Siciliano**

Chief Operating Officer

**Sharon Kleinhandler**

Chief Development Officer

**Louis Sartori**

Chief Counsel,  
Pro Bono Practice

**Surya Sayed-Ganguly**

Chief Information Officer

**Premali Shah**

Chief Financial Officer

**Vincent Paolo Villano**

Chief Communications Officer

**Ciara Walton**

Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

**Tami Wilson Rivera**

Chief Facilities and Asset Management Officer

# Officers and Board of Directors

Comprised of some of the brightest minds from law firms, law schools, corporations, and communities, our board members provide crucial guidance that strengthens our work.

## OFFICERS

**Alan Levine**  
President

**Twyla Carter**  
Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer

**David Greenwald**  
Treasurer

**Scott Rosenberg**  
Secretary and General Counsel

**Lauren Siciliano**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Premali Shah**  
Chief Financial Officer

## CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Zachary W. Carter

## VICE CHAIRS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mark P. Goodman

Tracy Richelle High

Sara E. Moss

Bradley I. Ruskin

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Joseph L. Sorkin

Gary Stein

Richard Strassberg

Dina Ganz Traugot

Charles Weinstein

Peter M. Williams

Jamie L. Wine



# Year By The Numbers



| 2022 YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

# Our Impact

Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society works in courtrooms and communities to deliver justice to New Yorkers. Every year, our direct representation of thousands of individuals informs our impact litigation efforts and policy advocacy, providing us with a powerful perspective from which to begin dismantling the systemic barriers that keep our clients from thriving.



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**183K+**

Individual legal matters handled by The Legal Aid Society.

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**201K+**

Hours of pro bono work by 2,737 legal volunteers.

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**31K+**

Helpline calls answered for a range of legal issues.

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**75K+**

Public housing residents expected to benefit from urgently-needed building repairs through the Public Housing Preservation Trust legislation that LAS helped pass.

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**4,900+**

Legal services provided by the Community Justice Unit, including rap sheet clinics, safe surrenders, and Know Your Rights events.

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**790+**

Consultations on education-related matters to ensure students receive the support and services they are entitled to.

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**136K+**

Households who gained critical protections against eviction after we brought litigation to reopen the state pandemic rental assistance portal.

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**480+**

Appeals and post-conviction applications filed by our Criminal Appeals Bureau.

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**560+**

Youth clients diverted from Criminal Court to Family Court, pursuant to Raise The Age, where they will be given the chance they deserve.

# 2022 Year in Review

# Moving Forward With Resolve

The Legal Aid Society handles hundreds of thousands of legal matters, but we measure our impact in terms of the more than 1.5 million vulnerable New Yorkers served by that work. We represent clients across many different areas of the law, giving us an up-close view of New Yorkers' day-to-day challenges, how they are impacted by laws and policies, and their interactions with city and state agencies. We leverage this unique perspective in combination with impact litigation and advocacy to dismantle oppressive systems and to help build new systems that uplift marginalized communities.

At the height of the pandemic, we were assisting our clients in navigating a court system that, though relying on a range of technologies for interaction, was still set up so that the monied, who could easily afford an attorney, got results.

But we learned from the experience, and emerged from the pandemic more dexterous than ever. We continue to be a touchstone, in a changing legal landscape, for people with limited resources. And our learnings have enabled us to better serve our clients, helping them navigate the court system as it returns to normal.

We also continue to grow our strategy of working across different units within the organization to best connect clients with critical resources that address their ongoing needs and obstacles. Our core strength, in fact, lies in our solidarity across units and practices.

This year, for example, we ensured safe and affordable housing for 60,000 New Yorkers through the holistic approach utilized by our Housing Justice units, which

combines eviction defense in housing court, enforcement of housing maintenance codes, tenant association advocacy, litigation to block limits on rent subsidies, and advancing legislation to stop unwarranted rent increases and evictions. The work of these units ensured that more New Yorkers were able to continue living in their homes despite rising rates of eviction following the expiration of the eviction moratorium. As New York City struggles with housing costs soaring to record levels, recouping the nearly one million jobs lost during the pandemic, and a surging homeless population driven by thousands of migrants transferred to the area from southern states, The Legal Aid Society's focus on economic justice and equity is as important as ever. Despite a challenging funding landscape and fewer staff, we have redoubled our efforts to help our low-income clients deal with an exponential growth in poverty, inflation, cost of living increases, and disenfranchisement. Whether it be ensuring the people we serve remain in safe and affordable homes, gain access to life-saving medical care or medical benefits they never had before, obtain work authorization, child support, or cash assistance—we are here for them.

In the pages that follow, we invite you to learn more about the hurdles we overcame in the last year, and the victories we achieved. As we emerge from the pandemic more determined than ever, we invite you to celebrate these accomplishments as we recommit, under our new Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer, to our mission of ensuring low-income New Yorkers have quality legal representation and thrive in vital aspects of their lives.



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**We put into action our understanding that it is not enough to talk about racial and economic justice — you must believe in it, stand with our community, and actively fight for it.**

**Adriene Holder**  
CHIEF ATTORNEY, CIVIL PRACTICE

# Bettering Clients' Lives Through Direct Representation

Whether it's the teenager facing suspension from school, the TGNCNBI+ person who needs to legally change their name to obtain government benefits, or the tenant battling a landlord attempting an end run around Right to Counsel laws by collecting back rent in small claims court – our two thousand attorneys are winning battles every day through direct representation work that improves the lives of our clients.

Holistic advocacy is the hallmark of our direct representation: attorneys, paralegals, investigators, case handlers, and social workers, exploring all angles of their clients' cases, relentlessly seeking to avoid unnecessary and unjust treatment under the law, while connecting clients with critical resources that address ongoing needs and obstacles.

Our education teams, for example, offers attorneys and social workers who provide direct representation services, such as assisting families with representing students in school disciplinary proceedings, or advocating for students at school meetings and mediations. Our staff combines this with community training programs or medical or legal partnerships that in turn ensure students receiving behavioral health treatment are able to access appropriate educational services. This sort of wrap-around service transcends a traditional definition of legal victory, resulting in clients who receive support services that make a meaningful difference in their lives. This can in turn can mean the difference between obtaining an education and transitioning into adulthood, or adulthood or being funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline – an

outcome whose value is immeasurable.

Similarly, the Criminal Defense Practice, which was a citywide public defender long before the United States Supreme Court mandated a constitutional right to public defense almost 60 years ago, makes up our largest practice, and provides high-volume holistic direct representation services across all five boroughs. Our criminal investigators locate and interview witnesses, photograph crime scenes, serve subpoenas, and testify in court, and their work often leads to evidence that exonerates a client or mitigates the case facts.

We are there for our clients throughout the life of a case, obtaining dismissals or sentence mitigations for people with mental or substance abuse conditions, and ensuring they receive treatment instead of punishment. If they are convicted, our appeals and parole units ensure our clients' rights are protected as they appeal their cases or after they return home from incarceration.

The Legal Aid Society has also stepped up as the economy continues to reel from the devastating impact of the pandemic. Low-income BIPOC clients experienced the

highest rates of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations and were at the same time most likely to lose their jobs and benefits, experience food instability, and face eviction from their homes. Despite this, the Civil Practice returned to its pre-pandemic level of handling nearly 52,000 legal matters, including almost 29,000 housing law and foreclosure matters led by our housing units, which benefitted nearly 60,000 New Yorkers. Outcomes significantly improved for these clients, allowing them to remain in safe and affordable homes, access life-saving medical care, or obtain work authorization, child support, or cash assistance.

This high volume of direct representation is the engine that fuels our legislative and litigation priorities, with the latter often arising from problems identified by the daily work of our offices across the city.





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I am proud and honored to work at The Legal Aid Society. Our clients, staff, and attorneys inspire me every day to build on our 146 year old legacy fighting for justice and equality on behalf of low-income New Yorkers.

| Twyla Carter

ATTORNEY-IN-CHIEF AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# Camari Banks Finds a Safe Space at School, in Dance

At 18 years old, Camari Banks is shy but self-assured. He is a high school student, a Popeye's employee, a dancer, a loyal friend, and an older brother to three younger siblings.

Camari describes his upbringing as solid and loving. From a young age he took school seriously and felt a sense of ownership over his life, which he credits to his mom, Tanesha Aikens. But despite the warmth and support in his home, he experienced a different side of humanity in school. From age nine, Camari was picked on by classmates who called him gay. Peers accused him of not showing enough masculinity, something that confused him. He had never thought of this as a problem.

At a time when more young people than ever before identify themselves outside of the gender binary, many also face an increase in bullying—both in-person and online. These numbers are higher for those perceived to be part of the LGBTQ+ community.

The attacks Camari faced were exhausting and traumatic. In high school, with social media widely accessible, threats worsened. This past winter a physical fight broke out at school, with Camari's sexuality the focus of the attack. Camari was suspended.

After the incident Camari received notice in the mail that he would face a suspension hearing. Through an online search Camari's mom, Tanesha, connected with two lawyers: Marie Mombrun and Joel Pietrzak, from The Legal Aid Society's Education Law Project (ELP). Mombrun and Pietrzak represented Camari at his suspension hearing—something that most of the time, students face without counsel.

ELP, a unit in Legal Aid's Civil Practice, works on a variety of cases advocating for low-income children and families. With a holistic approach that often aids beyond just the legal situation, ELP assists young people through and beyond whatever educational issue they face. The ELP team considers the potential collateral consequences of a school situation and sets students up for growth beyond just negating the initial issue. Mombrun notes the importance of tackling suspension hearings with a firm understanding of the repercussions at stake. "Suspensions are somewhat of a portal to the school-to-prison pipeline," she says. "If you only handle the suspension and don't get to the root of the issue then it [the legal representation] doesn't work."

After reducing some of the charges, Mombrun and Pietrzak took on the next problem Camari faced—figuring out a safe way for him to get an education. They helped him transfer in April to a new high school in Lower Manhattan. He started at City-As-School, a public high school where students have a non-traditional class schedule—fewer and longer classes and an internship for part of the week. Camari chose an internship at a farm. At the new school, he is finally able to explore who he is without force or fear. Most importantly, though, he has been able to keep the positive parts from his life before, like his dance team.

This past semester marked Camari's last season as a dancer with Secret Society Dance Company. He practiced almost every night of the week. Outside of school, work, and home, dance has been Camari's calling throughout his teenage years, "my outlet," he says. The team performs and competes around the city. Dance has been one of Camari's saving graces—accentuating his open mind, fortifying his friendships, and providing him with a mentor





in his coach, who Camari says touches on political and human rights issues through their routines.

He has found dance to be an incredibly non-discriminating practice. Camari's hope is to find similar channels in the future— something City-As-School is helping him plan for.

In reflecting on the difficulties of his past decade, Camari chalks it up to a learning experience. His struggle culminates in a sort of enlightenment: that those who bullied him were more unhappy with themselves than anything else. "There were a lot of demons trying to take me down," he says. "There was a lot of animosity in that [previous] building. Now I just feel like I think before I open my mouth... I think about how that person feels."

Camari will return to school in the fall for his senior year. He speaks on this and the future beyond with intention, excitement, and poise. He hopes to go to college or into the military, to study real estate, registered nursing, psychology, or teaching. "I love science," he says. "So, I'm thinking maybe I could study science and become a researcher or a scientist."

Though he knows these next steps will take work, Camari's commitment manifests in a full and vivid picture. "I want to go to Arizona or Florida. Even Texas. I think I'm a southern lover. I'm a palm tree type of person. I like the tropical. I want that tropical life. When I settle down, when I start my career, and buy my house—that's all I want." He pauses, then continues, "My life is starting now."



# Scaling Up Success Through Legislative Advocacy

Our advocacy work in the last year was marked by victories for trafficking survivors, homeless youth, and public housing residents. We also set the stage to push forward reforms to criminal record, juvenile interrogation, and tenant protection laws.

In years past, vulnerable New Yorkers were often prosecuted for prostitution and other crimes while being exploited by human traffickers. Convictions could lead to future difficulties in obtaining employment, housing, education, and other opportunities.

More survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence will be able to move forward without the stigma of a criminal record thanks to New York State's Survivors of Trafficking Attaining Relief Together (START) Act, which broadens the avenues for victims to clear convictions for crimes stemming from their trafficking experiences. START was signed into law in November 2021, following a vigorous five-year campaign by the New York Anti-Trafficking Network and the START Act Coalition. As a member of both groups, The Legal Aid Society's Exploitation Intervention Project (EIP) played a leading role in the effort, helping put together over 90 letters of support for the legislation, and to arrange for former EIP clients and other trafficking survivors to share their stories with lawmakers.

In just a year, the law has proved to be life-changing for EIP clients, with the Manhattan District Attorney's office not objecting to a single motion filed to vacate a survivor's conviction. That success came on top of the nearly 2,000 prostitution convictions dismissed through EIP's work over the last decade.

Passage of the START Act provides strong headwinds for the Criminal Defense Practice's continuing efforts to advance the Clean Slate Act, which would establish a process for sealing criminal records for millions of New Yorkers blocked from employment and housing due to their past convictions.

We also proved our ability to quickly respond to a rapidly changing political climate in Albany. When lawmakers threatened, in eleventh-hour negotiations on the state budget, to roll back reforms enacted to state bail and discovery laws in 2019, we stepped in and held off changes to the latter that would inevitably result in the jailing of more Black and Brown New Yorkers. In the next session, we will continue to press for the restoration of state bail laws to their 2020 form, ensuring more people are protected from being needlessly subjected to paying cash bail for minor crimes.

We will also prioritize in the coming year, as part of our overall decarceration campaign, passage of the Treatment Not Jail Act, which would ensure New Yorkers with substance use and mental health challenges are allowed to seek medical treatment in lieu of being imprisoned.

The Juvenile Rights Practice continues to bridge gaps in protections for vulnerable young New Yorkers. When detained by the police, many youth falsely confess to crimes because they are unaware of their right to remain silent and to be provided an attorney. We will push for passage of a state law – which enjoys broad support among a coalition of law enforcement, judges, and advocacy groups – that would guarantee young people are afforded counsel before they waive their Miranda rights.



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**In courts and communities throughout New York City, complex trial and post-conviction litigation, policy and law reform and mitigation form the center of our representation and advocacy work on behalf of those we serve.**

**Tina Luongo**  
CHIEF ATTORNEY,  
CRIMINAL DEFENSE PRACTICE

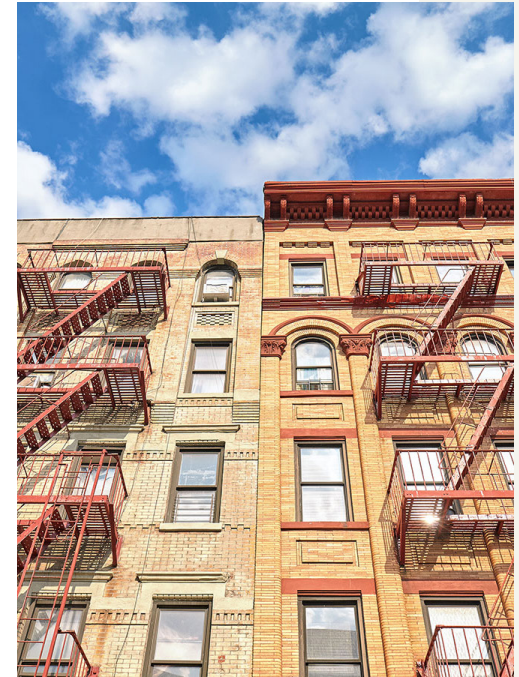


At a time in which millions of New Yorkers were susceptible to losing the roof over their heads, our Juvenile Rights and Civil practices joined efforts to usher a bill through the New York City Council providing, for the first time, rental assistance to 18-21-year-olds in the city.

The Civil practice remains committed to ensuring all New Yorkers have access to affordable and safe housing. A month before the state's eviction moratorium expired, we secured a state law increasing rental subsidies for low-income residents, thereby allowing 2,300 families in New York City to remain in their homes. Living conditions for those in public housing – who have suffered for years from utility outages, sewage overflows, and rodent infestations – will improve thanks to our efforts to enact legislation

creating a Public Housing Preservation Trust that will fund repairs to 25,000 housing units in the city.

With public outrage growing over soaring evictions in the wake of skyrocketing rents in New York City, we will step up our pressure on Albany to enact “Good Cause” legislation that would afford basic protections against unjust rent increases and unwarranted evictions. While we were not able to get the measure through the Assembly in the last session, we were able to beat back a proposed tax break for real estate developers that would have cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in exchange for purportedly creating more affordable housing.





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**Volunteers are inspired by the commitment of Legal Aid staff and the resiliency of our clients. The result? Better outcomes for clients and their communities.**

**Louis Sartori**  
CHIEF COUNSEL, PRO BONO PRACTICE

| CLIENT STORY

## Cynthia Saldana and Ashley Pagan Fight for Their Home

When a storm rained sheets of water through Cynthia Saldana's closed bedroom window, she bought the materials to fix it herself. When the bathroom ceiling burst, drenching her clothing closet, she didn't lose hope. Even a mushroom growing out of the molded wall wasn't Cynthia's last straw.

But when a gas leak was discovered in January at 1349 Stratford Avenue in the Bronx, gas lines for the entire building were shut off. As of August, Cynthia and her 26-year-old daughter, Ashley Pagan, still have no gas in their home. The never-ending outage made the deterioration in Cynthia and Ashley's longtime home begin to feel unmanageable. It also began to represent something larger than just physical damage. The women felt forgotten.

Three generations of Cynthia's family have shared the apartment at 1349 Stratford for close to two decades. Many residents in the 72-unit building have lived there even longer. For years, the building management has worsened.

Combined with the outage of gas at 1349 Stratford Avenue, tenants also experienced periods of lack of heat and hot water. No gas meant no functioning stoves and ovens. Complaints went largely unanswered. Over the winter, Cynthia and Ashley's dog, Archie, a thick and stout corgi, was freezing. The women worried about leaving a space heater on because of the recent and fatal fire at nearby Twin Parks North West.



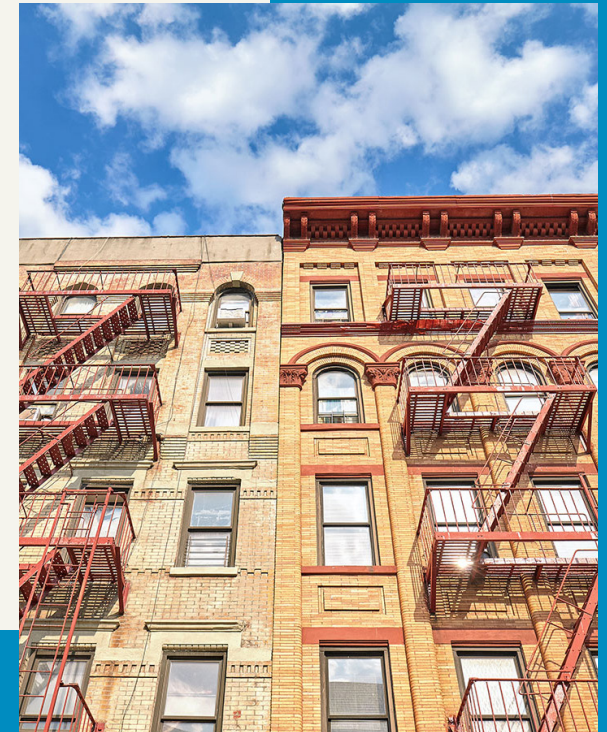
Since January, the two women have relied on a hot plate to cook: a small, weak, and inefficient electric device that adds to their rising electricity bills. Hot plates have no oven mechanism and take an excessive amount of time to heat; cooking rice takes 15 minutes on a stovetop, but close to an hour on a hot plate.

Tenants are forced to rely on unhealthy food options like fried food, which is faster to make, or takeout. The women work full time, but financial strain is a growing challenge the longer they go without a working kitchen.

To advocate for tenants' rights in low-income communities, and with funding from the City's Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program, The Legal Aid Society created the Housing Justice Unit-Group Advocacy Project. Their goal is to work with those facing harassment and displacement to keep them and their families in their homes. They focus on maintaining stable and healthy living conditions for these residents, preventing landlords from taking advantage of their tenants. Residents at 1349 Stratford, including Cynthia and Ashley, connected with Legal Aid lawyers Ben Seibel and Russell Crane through the office of State Senator Luis Sepulveda.

Seibel and Crane held tenant meetings where people could express their frustrations, share their stories, and air complaints in a safe environment. Both Cynthia and Ashley attended these and were vocal about their issues. After the meetings, Legal Aid filed a lawsuit representing 41 of the apartments (over half of the building) against the property owners and management. Complaints included cockroach and mice infestations, mold, lack of gas, malfunctioning outlets, holes in walls, and leaks, among a slew of other violations.

New York is Cynthia Saldana's home. She moved here from Puerto Rico at age 6. She raised her daughter here, and her mother is in a nursing home nearby. She calls herself a helper and manifests this energy around her, "I like to help everybody. But don't take my kindness for weakness either. If I see someone struggling, I will sit there and help that person." She was thrilled when Legal Aid signed on to represent the tenants in their fight. And though the process hasn't been easy, she's seen progress.





## 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

# Effecting Systemic Change Through Strategic Litigation

The Legal Aid Society also obtains economic relief for its clients today, as well as systemic solutions that protect future generations of New Yorkers, through impact litigation.

We reacted swiftly when the state prematurely shut down the Emergency Rental Assistance Program portal in December 2021, at a time in which hundreds of thousands of New York families were behind on their rent due to the COVID-19 economic crisis. We filed suit immediately, and a month later the portal began accepting rent relief applications again. In all, more than \$2 billion has been distributed through ERAP to keep low- and moderate-income families in their homes, including another \$800 million added to the fund by the state last spring, and \$100 million in October by the federal government.

Our strategy of identifying systemic problems within the justice system through our direct representation work, then addressing them through litigation, proved itself when we settled a lawsuit against discriminatory practices by the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD). The issue was identified in 2013, when attorneys at our trial offices noticed a pattern of plainclothes PAPD officers arresting LGBTQ+ people in Port Authority Bus Terminal bathrooms on false charges of public lewdness and exposure. We sued PAPD in 2017, and the settlement we reached this year brought a halt to these patrols by officers in the bus station, and mandated sensitivity training for new PAPD recruits.

We are also pressing forward with our ongoing effort to address systemic failures within the New York carceral system, and to hold the Department of Correction (DOC) accountable for these deficiencies. Sadly, every week seemingly brings the news of another death of an inmate on Rikers Island, and yet on its watch DOC still allows thousands of inmates to miss critical medical appointments. The Legal Aid Society filed a class action suit to help stem this humanitarian catastrophe, and the State Supreme Court responded by first ordering DOC to ensure people make their appointments, then fining the agency when it failed to fulfill the order. We are also pressing for the appointment of a federal receiver in our longstanding class action about brutality in the jails, and while that outcome has been delayed by a federal judge, we will continue to press for the necessary change to protect our clients from harm.

The Legal Aid Society is also employing litigation to help ensure children in foster care are placed in the best home environments in New York City, where every day relatives are denied the right to take care of these children because of criminal convictions that can stretch back to decades ago. We filed suit to compel the City Administration for Children Services to reverse these rules, which disproportionately affect low-income people of color, and allow “kinship placements” that provide a sense of stability to children coping with the trauma of having their families disrupted.





“

**In our 60th year of serving New York City children, the Juvenile Rights Practice now leads the nation with our child-centered, interdisciplinary model of representation that sees the whole child and elevates the value of family.**

**Dawne Mitchell**  
CHIEF ATTORNEY, JUVENILE RIGHTS PRACTICE

# Awards & Recognition



# Our staff is our greatest asset at The Legal Aid Society

## The Marden Awards

Without the people who dedicate themselves to the fight every day, pursuing our mission to deliver equal justice would not be possible. The Legal Aid Society's Marden Awards celebrate our hardworking staff and honor their commitment and achievements.

The Legal Aid Society established the Orison S. Marden Awards in 1976, our centennial year, to recognize the excellence and dedication of our staff. The awards honor the memory of Orison S. Marden, a leader of the organized bar, a partner at White & Case LLP, and a former Chair of our Board of Directors. For over 40 years, Mr. Marden was a dedicated supporter of The Legal Aid Society, often traveling to the Harlem Neighborhood Office to volunteer as a pro bono attorney.

Each year, the awards are presented at our Annual Meeting. A diverse committee of managers, exempt, and union representatives select award recipients from nominations submitted by staff.

Whether on the front lines providing direct client services or working on critical office operations, this year's recipients demonstrated efforts that went above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of our clients. Marden Awards are given to attorneys, managers, and core staff, including paralegals, social workers, investigators, and support staff.

### CORE STAFF MARDEN AWARD



**Gislaine Phillip**  
Paralegal II,  
Criminal Defense Practice

### STAFF ATTORNEY MARDEN AWARD



**Jane-Roberte Sampeur**  
Staff Attorney,  
Criminal Defense Practice

### MANAGER MARDEN AWARD



**Melinda Andra**  
Assistant Attorney-in-Charge,  
Juvenile Rights Practice

## The Sandra Scott Memorial Award

The Legal Aid Society suffered a terrible loss on July 1, 2016, when our beloved Chief Financial Officer Sandra Scott lost her valiant struggle against cancer. Her courage, integrity, and dedication serve as her legacy. The Sandra Scott Memorial Award for Excellence recognizes the dedication and outstanding achievement of a member of our non-lawyer central administrative staff.



**Gregory Insardi**  
Application Support Specialist

# 2022 Pro Bono Awards

This year over 2,700 volunteers from the private bar, corporate legal departments, and law schools throughout the country generously donate hundreds of thousands of hours to The Legal Aid Society. Our volunteer partners fight tirelessly in demanding racial, social, and economic justice for the clients and communities we serve. But no metrics can adequately quantify what pro bono assistance means to a family facing homelessness, a client whose rights are violated by unlawful police conduct, or a child in foster care whose educational needs are not being met. The critical work of delivering systemic change for vulnerable New Yorkers simply could not happen without our partners.

## The Honorable Jonathan Lippman Pro Bono Publico & Public Service Law Firm Award

### Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP

The Legal Aid Society is proud to recognize Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel for its exceptional pro bono commitment to our organization and clients.

Under the leadership of Board Member and Co-Managing Partner Paul H. Schoeman, along with Co-Managing Partner Howard T. Spilko, Pro Bono Committee Co-Chairs Christopher S. Auguste and Aaron Frankel, and Director of Professional Development and Pro Bono Programs Jamie Porco, the attorneys, legal assistants, and administrative staff at Kramer Levin have been a committed partner in meeting the legal needs of the less fortunate in New York City. In the past year, dozens of firm staff have contributed nearly 3,000 hours of legal services to our clients, in areas ranging from immigration defense, bankruptcy, criminal appeals, business development for low-income entrepreneurs, and community justice programs.

Since 2010, for example, Kramer Levin has served as co-counsel in *Smith v. Proud*, a class action suit on behalf of public assistance recipients whose benefits were wrongfully reduced. In 2018, a settlement was reached that required the City and State to pay retroactive benefits to more than 49,000 eligible class members. When Kramer Levin and The Legal Aid Society discovered in July 2021 that the government had failed to issue payments to all eligible members, they returned to court. In May 2022, an additional 4,800 individuals received payments, bringing the total amount of retroactive benefits to more than \$22 million.

Beginning in 2018, Kramer Levin Partner Steven S. Sparling and his team have worked tirelessly with The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU) to combat the illegal secretive nature of the New York City Police Department gang database. Any member of the database, largely communities of color, are criminalized wholesale, given no notice of being entered into it, and don't have an opportunity to challenge being added or given a chance to be removed. The firm and the CJU have helped hundreds of people submit requests under the Do It Yourself FOIL Initiative, and have litigated numerous FOIL denials in the State Supreme Court. This has in turn shed light on the bloated and misguided scope of the database and the relentless surveillance involved in its upkeep.

Kramer Levin is also an inaugural law firm partner in the Plea Appeals Project of The Legal Aid Society's Criminal Appeals Bureau, which advocates for clients given excessive sentences. Pro bono attorneys and paralegals from the firm have submitted briefs, conducted oral arguments, and in several cases secured sentence reductions in New York's Appellate Division First Judicial Department.

Through its extraordinary pro bono commitment to The Legal Aid Society and its clients, the firm has clearly demonstrated that Kramer Levin shares Judge Lippman's goal of making equal justice for all not just an ideal, but a reality.

# 2022 Pro Bono Awards

## Public Interest Law Leadership Award



**Jennifer L. Colyer, Esq.**  
Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobsen LLP

Jennifer Colyer is recognized for her extraordinary contributions as a volunteer attorney, for her constant support of The Legal Aid Society and its clients, and as the leader of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobsen’s outstanding pro bono program since 2000.

Since being honored in 2010 by The Legal Aid Society for her work on behalf of clients applying for resentencing relief under the New York’s Drug Reform Act, Jennifer has done extensive and exemplary work on criminal cases and LGBTQ rights.

Jennifer’s tireless work on behalf of immigrants has also garnered widespread praise in New York’s immigration advocacy community. Jennifer and her Fried Frank colleagues have handled matters across the immigration spectrum, including asylum, the Violence Against Women Act, U-Visa, and cancellation of removal cases. Most recently, Jennifer has provided leadership and supervision to The Legal Aid Society’s immigration helpline, and remote volunteer projects that assist clients with deferred action renewals under DACA and naturalization.

Jennifer has previously been honored by Her Justice, Unchained at Last, Immigration Equality and the New York City Bar Association. She has lectured on immigration and pro bono management at the ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference and Columbia Law School. Jennifer has also held leadership positions with the Association of Pro Bono Counsel, Immigration Equality Action Fund, and the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance.

We are proud to recognize Jennifer with the 2022 Public Interest Law Leadership Award, and salute her dedication to our mission that no person should be denied the right to equal justice.

## Pro Bono Honor Roll

Volunteers from the following firms have been nominated by the staff of The Legal Aid Society for providing outstanding pro bono assistance to the clients and communities we serve.

Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP	Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP	Selendy Gay Elsberg PLLC
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The Legal Aid Society is proud to acknowledge the outstanding support of the Sustaining Law Firms, whose dedication helps ensure that all New Yorkers have access to equal justice.

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## | DONOR STORY

# Charles Evans Hughes Foundation

It began sixty years ago, with a \$250 check to The Legal Aid Society.

Since that modest donation on December 13, 1962, The Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation, launched by his daughter Catherine and her husband Chauncey Waddell, has poured more than \$1.3 million into our programs. The Legal Aid Society is the only organization to receive a gift from the Hughes Foundation in every year of its existence. The sustained giving of the Foundation, whose mission includes protection of legal and human rights for the traditionally disenfranchised, has enabled us to connect unemployed and low-income New Yorkers to the benefits they need, protect vulnerable immigrants from detention and deportation, keep families in safe, affordable housing, and ensure they are treated fairly by the law and not held back by the systemic barriers that keep people trapped in poverty.

For example, the Civil practice in the last year handled over 51,000 legal matters benefiting nearly 113,000 New Yorkers, helping them in the midst of economic crisis to stay in their homes, maintain access to vital benefits, and keep their businesses open. The Foundation's continued support contributed to these efforts.

Namesake Charles Evans Hughes, governor of New York from 1907-1910 and Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1930-1941, was a passionate advocate for the legal aid movement. He was named The Legal Aid Society's third president in 1917, and during his tenure helped secure the backing of law firms across New York City for our work. Hughes' family carried on his legacy through the Foundation's support of The Legal Aid Society and other organizations defending legal and human rights in New York and nationwide.

At the end of 2022, 74 years after Hughes' death, the Foundation bearing his name will wind down its affairs, but not without one last generous gift to The Legal Aid Society. The Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation has been there for us for more than a third of our history, and has helped pave the way for our work for years to come.

# In Appreciation of Our Corporate Advocates

Through financial contributions, volunteering partnerships, and event sponsorships, our Corporate Advocates make a lasting impact on our city.

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# Daniel Kolb

Dan Kolb, a dedicated donor to The Legal Aid Society for decades, is a strong believer in our mission.

His passion for equal justice has been a core part of his work since his career began. Over his five decades with Davis Polk & Wardwell, he made pro bono defense a significant part of his caseload. When Kolb first interviewed for a position with the firm in the 1960s, he was told that support for public defense was tightly interwoven into its culture. Davis Polk's continuous efforts for all of his career, and its outstanding support for the Society, bore that out. To honor his achievements, he received The Legal Aid Society's Pro Bono Award for Outstanding Public Service in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018.

As a senior litigator for Davis Polk in the early 2000s, Kolb joined the Board of The Legal Aid Society. At the time, public defenders in New York State were facing a significant shortfall in funding for criminal defense. While they had well-honed criminal defense practices with teams of dedicated attorneys, the shortage in state funding for criminal defense meant that there were not enough of them to ensure all their clients received quality constitutionally mandated representation.

Kolb supported The Legal Aid Society's campaign to persuade Albany to increase its funding for criminal defense. Working with our senior leadership, board members, and colleagues from Davis Polk, Kolb assisted with our two-prong strategy of litigation and advocacy. "It was a major undertaking," he recalls, requiring several years of effort, but ultimately, with the backing of Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, the state agreed to significantly hike funding. This helped improve materially the quality of client representation.

During his time on the board, Kolb also served as the chair of the Development Committee and was instrumental in helping to double the number of Sustaining Law Firm partners supporting The Legal Aid Society. His energy and commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to justice was truly inspiring to others. To this day, staffers with The Legal Aid Society salute the efforts of Dan and his colleagues.

Dan remains a member of The Board of Advisers and a loyal donor to the organization. We are so grateful for his ongoing advocacy and his continued personal investment in our mission.





# Justice Network

At the start of 2022, The Legal Aid Society launched the Justice Network, a new membership program to better connect our community of individual donors to our mission. We are pleased to specially recognize our inaugural Justice Network members, whose generous support has provided critical resources to our client communities.

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# Indeed

As the world's most visited job search site, it's to be expected that Indeed would have an interest in reducing barriers to employment. But the company goes beyond easing access to technology and transportation for job seekers facing barriers in the U.S., placing equal emphasis on supporting organizations that, like The Legal Aid Society, provide assistance with the sealing of criminal records that can hinder job searching and advancement.

Through its new corporate giving program, Indeed amply demonstrated this year its commitment to the notion that job candidates should be fairly considered regardless of their criminal histories with a generous gift to The Legal Aid Society. These are supporting our Case Closed Project, where we educate the public on expunging criminal records and assist with record sealing applications, and our Worker Justice Project, which provides representation to people unlawfully denied jobs because of arrest or conviction histories. In just a short time, Indeed's support has provided tangible results, helping underwrite an outreach event we held in Brooklyn where 125 people were educated on criminal record sealing, in addition to provision of record sealing advice and representation to over 300 clients.

These include people like "Mr. B," who we took as a client after he was suspended by his employer due to a pending criminal case. After discussing the matter with the employer, we were able to get him reinstated while the case was pending, as well as the reimbursement of over \$3,500 in lost wages.

Indeed's backing is making possible these direct services – a caseload we are at the same time working to lighten through the passage in Albany of the Clean Slate bill, which would create a system for automatic expungement of criminal records.

# Servant of Justice

The Servant of Justice Awards is The Legal Aid Society's annual celebration of our work, our victories, and our partners. Each year, we gather together to recognize those individuals and institutions who have stood together to fight for equitable access to justice in all its forms. We are most appreciative of those individuals and institutions whose support sustains our work and makes success possible.

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# Servant of Justice

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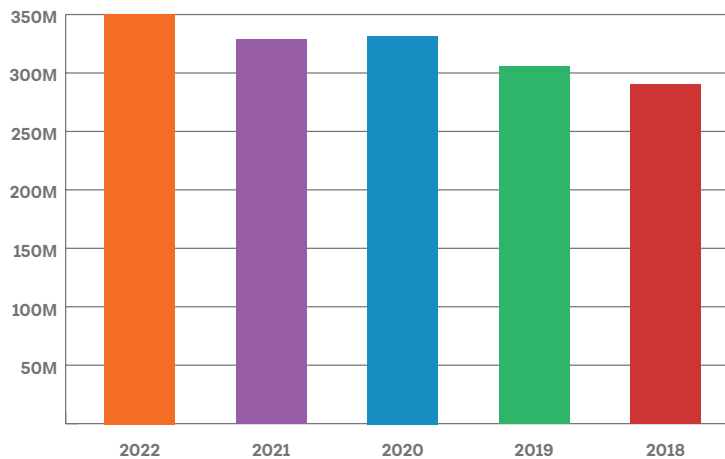
# Statement of Financial Position

Assets	2021	2022
Cash and cash equivalents	\$18,400,584	\$48,053,395
Receivables from grants and governmental contracts, and other	\$97,647,480	\$85,049,109
Investments, at fair value	\$11,268,514	\$10,320,823
Deferred charges and other assets	\$826,566	\$1,414,049
Property and equipment, at cost, net	\$3,930,825	\$8,250,370
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$132,073,969</b>	<b>\$153,087,746</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Asset Deficiency</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$13,132,074	\$15,996,597
Accrued payroll and other employee expenses	\$36,910,784	\$45,383,222
Program advances	\$952,521	\$19,790,379
Line of credit	\$2,250,000	
Accrued post retirement health and benefits cost	\$71,569,807	\$51,352,054
Pension liability	\$4,274,168	\$2,612,526
Deferred lease incentives and lease obligations	\$14,100,397	\$21,261,891
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$143,189,751</b>	<b>\$156,396,669</b>
<b>Commitments and Contingencies</b>		
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without donor restrictions	-\$18,260,306	-\$10,122,835
With donor restrictions		
Purpose and time restricted	\$5,043,501	\$4,514,970
Perpetual in nature	\$2,101,023	\$2,298,942
<b>Total net assets with donor restrictions</b>	<b>\$7,144,524</b>	<b>\$6,813,912</b>
<b>Total net assets (deficiency)</b>	<b>-\$11,115,782</b>	<b>-\$3,308,923</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets (deficiency)</b>	<b>\$132,073,969</b>	<b>\$153,087,746</b>

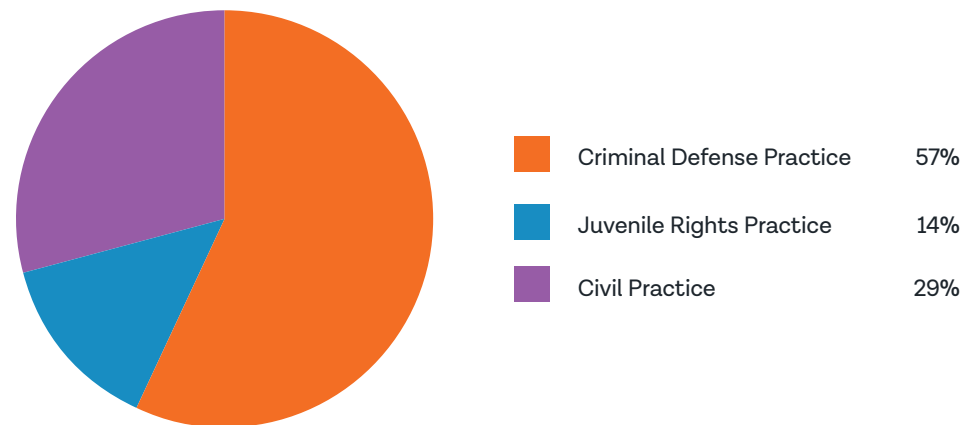
# Revenues

	2021	2022
Criminal Defense Practice	\$187,353,547	\$200,431,826
Juvenile Rights Practice	\$44,174,645	\$48,927,731
Civil Practice	\$80,345,165	\$85,560,364
Contributions (net of direct expenses related to the benefit)	\$14,887,978	\$15,481,400
Return (loss) on investments, net	\$1,244,937	-\$942,475
Court awards	\$47,374	\$42,592
Other income	\$2,345	\$490,030
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$328,055,991</b>	<b>\$349,991,468</b>

Revenue over 5 years



2022 Revenues

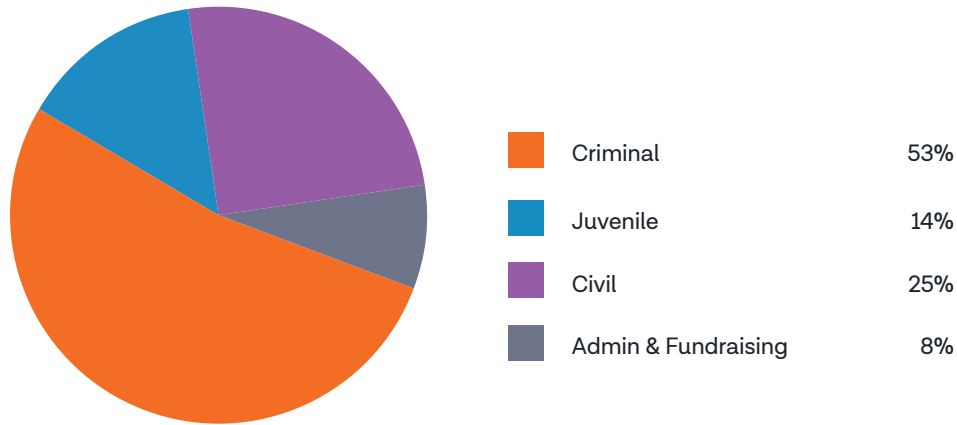


# Expenses

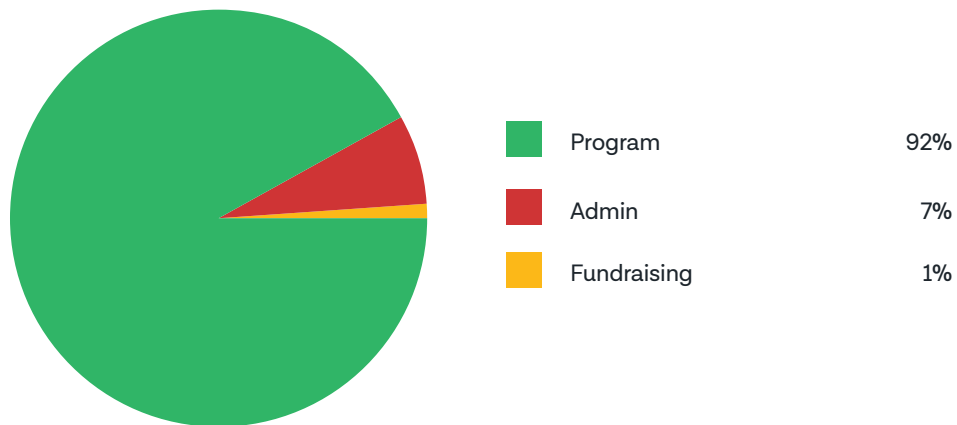
	Criminal Defense	Juvenile Rights Practice	Civil Practice	Total Program Expenses	Total Admin/ Fundraising	2022 Total Expenses	2021 Total Expenses
<b>Employee Expenses</b>							
Professional staff salaries	\$82,149,375	\$22,827,655	\$37,643,910	\$142,620,940	\$7,845,659	\$150,466,599	\$148,208,937
Support staff salaries	\$24,044,672	\$6,081,743	\$10,579,296	\$40,705,711	\$4,569,266	\$45,274,977	\$45,104,112
Fringe benefits & other employee costs	\$53,439,428	\$14,695,420	\$24,190,446	\$92,325,294	\$6,056,883	\$98,382,177	\$96,196,575
<b>Total employee expenses</b>	<b>\$159,633,475</b>	<b>\$43,604,818</b>	<b>\$72,413,652</b>	<b>\$275,651,945</b>	<b>\$18,471,808</b>	<b>\$294,123,753</b>	<b>\$289,509,624</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>							
Occupancy costs	\$17,958,484	\$3,876,084	\$9,208,161	\$31,042,729	\$2,160,520	\$33,203,249	\$21,629,227
Communications	\$1,255,859	\$322,137	\$653,055	\$2,231,051	\$118,288	\$2,349,339	\$2,326,557
Office operating	\$1,169,152	\$267,766	\$531,728	\$1,968,646	\$465,851	\$2,434,497	\$1,683,274
Purchases and leases of furniture and equipment	\$3,401,051	\$238,441	\$624,971	\$4,264,463	\$714,469	\$4,978,932	\$4,268,081
Law books and reference materials	\$565,379	\$126,166	\$631,465	\$1,323,010	\$8,381	\$1,331,391	\$1,267,514
Trial minutes	\$289,664	\$58,573	\$7,788	\$356,025	\$147	\$356,172	\$166,700
Cost of investigations & expert witnesses	\$1,292,001	\$42,632	\$728,490	\$2,063,123	\$41,863	\$2,104,986	\$1,434,420
Professional services	\$347,124	\$20,208	\$3,751,677	\$4,119,009	\$1,391,323	\$5,510,332	\$5,287,311
Transportation	\$518,583	\$20,295	\$36,335	\$575,213	\$19,365	\$594,578	\$362,304
Insurance	\$464,073	\$120,573	\$227,588	\$812,234	\$54,384	\$866,618	\$838,220
Depreciation & amortization	\$146,483	\$30,767	\$216,629	\$393,879	\$101,170	\$495,049	\$661,964
Other	\$385,230	\$62,080	\$1,448,902	\$1,896,212	\$3,876,176	\$5,772,388	\$4,663,817
<b>Total other expenses</b>	<b>\$27,793,083</b>	<b>\$5,185,722</b>	<b>\$18,066,789</b>	<b>\$51,045,594</b>	<b>\$8,951,937</b>	<b>\$59,997,531</b>	<b>\$44,589,389</b>
<b>Total expenses, excluding other than net periodic costs</b>	<b>\$187,426,558</b>	<b>\$48,790,540</b>	<b>\$90,480,441</b>	<b>\$326,697,539</b>	<b>\$27,423,745</b>	<b>\$354,121,284</b>	<b>\$334,099,013</b>

# Expenses

## 2022 Total Expenses: Practice Area



## 2022 Financial Efficiency: Business Area



**Note:** We spend 92 cents of every dollar on our programs.

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