

# BUILDING TOWARDS A NEW VISION FOR JUSTICE



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# MISSION

To provide high-quality, free legal services to Marylanders living in poverty through representation and advocacy and to bring meaningful change to the systems that impact them.

## VISION

To lead in providing high-quality legal services; to build on mutual respect for clients, staff, and others; to advocate for justice; and to add maximum positive value to all who request legal assistance.

## IN THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

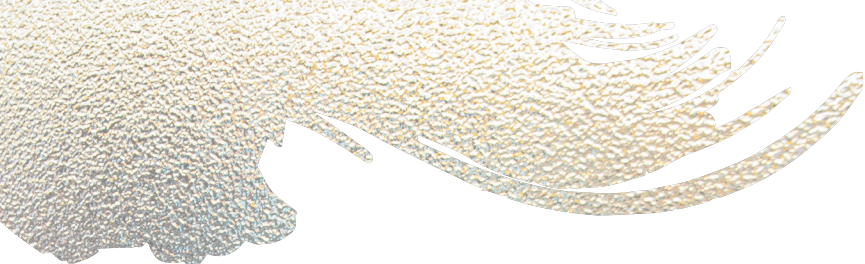
Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a statewide private, nonprofit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to low-income and vulnerable people to address their most fundamental legal problems. From its 12 offices around the state and through its many community-based clinics, we help our clients preserve and access safe and affordable housing, maintain custody of their children, and be safe from domestic violence. MLA increases our clients' economic security by defending against consumer debt, including foreclosures and tax sales, removing barriers to employment, and accessing critical income supports such as unemployment, food stamps and other vital public benefits.

Through special projects, we represent seniors, nursing home residents, children in alleged abuse and neglect cases, migrant farmworkers, and those in mental health institutions. In its advocacy, MLA seeks systemic change through impact litigation, policy advocacy and by telling our clients' compelling stories.

## MLA PROVIDES LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR CLIENTS FOR A VARIETY OF ISSUES, SUCH AS:

- Preventing evictions and fighting for safe, stable housing
- Advocating for improvement of substandard housing
- Acquiring critical health care
- Obtaining disability and other income assistance
- Maintaining custody and support of children
- Preventing foreclosures or mitigating their effects
- Recovering unpaid wages
- Remedying fraudulent sales practices and predatory contracts
- Dealing with debts and debt collectors
- Obtaining unemployment benefits
- Obtaining protection against domestic violence
- Expunging criminal records to remove barriers to obtaining housing, employment, child custody, and a driver's license





## Dear Supporters and Friends,



As Maryland Legal Aid moved to build our new vision for justice in 2023, we continued our undiminished resolve to advance our critical mission – to provide equal justice for low-income and vulnerable Marylanders. Maryland Legal Aid has vigorously pursued justice and equity, providing free, high quality legal assistance to those in need within our community. This annual report shares some of our achievements and challenges and celebrates the unwavering support and dedication that you – our volunteers, funders, donors, and supporters – have generously provided.

In 2023, Maryland Legal Aid began its essential work to craft a new strategic vision and direction for our more than 100-year-old legal services organization. Drawing on our storied past and impactful advocacy, we engaged in an inclusive process to develop a new strategic vision that looks forward, seeks to have deeper impact in the work we do, and addresses the urgent needs facing people experiencing poverty. That new strategic plan will be unveiled in 2024 and will position Maryland Legal Aid as a force for justice in our state that provides vigorous legal representation and challenges inequitable and unfair systems.

However, to be clear, we have not waited for a new strategic plan to do our vital work on behalf of low-income and vulnerable Marylanders. We continued to show up every day to address our clients' most critical needs in fundamental areas such as housing, consumer protection, family law and domestic violence, economic empowerment and income support. These efforts were crucial in a year marked by persistent challenges, including the ongoing effects and loss of pandemic-related support for vulnerable people in our state.

Our achievements this year on behalf of those we represent were made possible through the collective efforts of our staff, volunteers, partners, and, importantly, our funders and donors. Your belief in our mission has been instrumental in our ability to respond swiftly and effectively to the evolving needs of our fellow Marylanders. As we look toward the future, your continued support is vital in ensuring that Maryland Legal Aid can sustain and expand its essential services.

Thank you for standing with us in 2023. We look forward to our continued partnership and the strides we will make together in the coming years to ensure a more equitable, inclusive and just society for us all.

With deepest gratitude,

Vicki Schultz, Esq.  
Executive Director



# WHAT'S NEW

## MLA'S VISION AND NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Maryland Legal Aid launched its strategic planning process in 2023 and made significant progress toward crafting a new strategic vision for the future. We engaged a consultant to help design an inclusive process that involved all our staff and board through an organizational assessment, focus groups, and surveys. Importantly, the process involved more than a hundred staff in twelve staff-led workgroups, six of which were focused on our legal substantive work and six focused on our organization. The workgroups examined our current practices, spoke with key stakeholders, researched best practices, and developed recommendations for our future direction.

In October, all our staff and board came together in Ocean City, thanks to the support of an MLSC one-time grant. At the retreat, the workgroups presented their recommendations and gave feedback about our new mission, vision, and core values. We also enjoyed a chance to be together, celebrate staff milestones and successes and have some fun.

Armed with invaluable input and feedback from staff and other key stakeholders, a strategic planning committee consisting of staff and board members crafted a draft plan. The strategic plan, that will lay out MLA's strategic direction for the next five years is scheduled for board approval in spring 2024.

## CHANGES TO EXPUNGEMENT LAW WITH LEGALIZATION OF CANNABIS: New Opportunities for Relief

On July 1, 2023, Maryland legalized cannabis for adults 21 and older. In October, the law regarding expungement changed decreasing the time for expungement relief for certain offenses. Maryland Legal Aid joined forces with other legal services partners to help educate people about the changes in the law and to support statewide expungement efforts.

Maryland Legal Aid, with its legal services partners, mounted an extensive outreach and education campaign about the relief available under Maryland's new laws. We also began a robust series of collaborative community clinics involving staff and volunteers who advised people about their rights and assisted in preparing expungement petitions. Our lawyers filed those petitions in court to ensure that people received the critical, life-changing relief the new laws provide.

Maryland Legal Aid also conducted training sessions with community partners. The first one was aimed at practicing attorneys and held at the Judicial College of Maryland in partnership with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. The second training was focused on case managers and social workers at the Maryland Department of Human Services who are part of the Emerging Adult Workgroup at DHS that assists young adults transitioning out of the foster care system with employment, housing, and other resources.

## TENANT RIGHT TO COUNSEL PROJECT EXPANDS TENANTS' RIGHTS BY PROVIDING LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR MARYLANDERS FACING EVICTION

In 2023, Maryland Legal Aid launched the Tenant Right to Counsel Project (TRCP) as part of the statewide implementation of the Maryland Access to Counsel in Evictions ("ACE") Program. Only one of three states to provide a right to counsel for low-income Marylanders facing eviction, the program has tremendous potential to make a real difference for tenants and, in this early phase of implementation, it already has. We have expanded our capacity, resulting in more than 50 paralegals and attorneys spending 22,700 hours to provide vital legal representation to Maryland tenants under threat of eviction.

To reach Marylanders who qualify for representation but may not know that they have a right to counsel, the ACE program includes "same-day representation" in rent court. Maryland Legal Aid, as the only statewide provider, is part of these efforts in every jurisdiction. We provide day-of-court assistance to tenants, including in Baltimore City, Washington County, Carroll County, Charles County, Montgomery County and Frederick County. Maryland Legal Aid's staff and its Equal

Justice Works Housing Justice Fellows have been engaged in community-based outreach efforts as well to inform tenants about their rights and the legal representation available by law.

In this early stage of the program, the Tenant Right to Counsel Project has made a meaningful difference. Our representation has prevented an eviction or subsidy termination in 39% of closed cases and delayed an eviction in 30% of cases, thereby helping clients avoid sudden displacement. In many other cases, clients were able to have critical repairs done, avoided unfair charges, or obtained other benefits such as reasonable accommodations.

Maryland's right to counsel law ensures that income-eligible renters shall have access to free legal representation when faced with eviction. MLA is pleased to play a part in our state's transformational effort to prevent eviction, ensure safe housing and promote greater housing stability.

## MARYLAND LEGAL AID BOARD LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Warren Oliveri, who served on Maryland Legal Aid's board of directors for 37 years and as president of the board for most of that time, stepped down from the board last June. The board elected fellow board member, Brian Hochheimer, to serve as the next board president.

Warren's leadership and commitment to Maryland Legal Aid was extraordinary. During his many years on the board, Warren played an instrumental role in the growth and development of the organization, elevating its profile and extending its reach to be able to serve clients from multiple offices throughout our state.

"We are grateful to Warren for his steadfast dedication to the mission of Maryland Legal Aid and his unwavering support," said MLA executive director Vicki Schultz. "Though he is no longer on the board, we know that Warren will always remain a true friend to Maryland Legal Aid." Schultz added, "We appreciate Brian's willingness to assume leadership of the board and look forward to his fresh perspective and innovative ideas as he leads MLA through this important and impactful transition."



**29,811** clients  
received legal services  
and assistance impacting  
**45,575** individuals  
in their household



**12,000** of those clients  
were referred to both legal  
and non-legal entities



**16,116**  
cases closed



**10,222** individuals  
received housing services



**5,018** individuals  
received family services,  
providing legal assistance  
in family law matters



**834** cases worked on  
resulting in **2,512** dockets  
filed for criminal record  
expungements

# MR. K'S PATH TOWARDS STABILITY AND WELLNESS

Mr. K. worked as a behavioral health counselor for more than a decade, helping individuals struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues. Last July, his life took a devastating turn when he suffered a massive heart attack. He could no longer work and was placed on the waiting list for a heart transplant.

Without any income, Mr. K. was unable to pay rent and buy food. He often had to ration his medications, forcing him to endure excruciating pain. Though he applied for disability income assistance, Mr. K. waited for nearly a year for a decision.

During that time, his landlord tried to evict him multiple times and refused to accept the rental assistance for which Mr. K. was eligible. Mr. K.'s life-saving heart medication required refrigeration, so the prospect of homelessness became a life-or-death situation for him.

Fortunately, through its Medical-Legal Partnership with Kaiser Permanente, Mr. K. was referred to Maryland Legal Aid. MLA Staff Attorney Cory Warren navigated multiple legal battles with Mr. K., including winning three separate failure-to-pay-rent cases over the course of the year.

Mr. Warren got the landlord to accept rental assistance payments for which Mr. K. was eligible. He also helped Mr. K. execute a power of attorney and an advanced directive to give him peace of mind.

When clients like Mr. K. face such high-stakes situations, they should not face it alone. Marylanders deserve the holistic representation and tenacious advocacy MLA provides its clients every single day.

“He went beyond what I expected, and if it were not for his efforts, I could have very well been trying to survive this past winter homeless. He shielded me from every effort to force an eviction and I truly believe he helped save me.

**I would not have been able to fight this alone.”**



**8,715** renters'  
cases handled



## A LEGAL JOURNEY FOR A CHILD'S SAFETY

While at the Prince George's County Courthouse, Morgan McManus, a domestic violence and family law lawyer for Maryland Legal Aid, overheard a woman in distress discussing her order of protection. McManus asked the woman, Mary Jones,\* "How can I help?"

Her children, Jones said, were being abused by their father, who also refused to address the mental health needs of one of the children. Jones said she had been battling with the father for nine months. Angered by her request for a protective order, the father responded by asking the court to change the agreement and let him have sole custody of one child. Jones said she felt harassed and exhausted by his attempts to retaliate, continuous disappearances and his lack of follow-through.

McManus immediately advised her to start the intake process with MLA. McManus promised to follow up with her the next day if she did.

Knowing that the custody modification requested by the father was not in either child's best interests, MLA agreed to represent Ms. Jones. McManus went into action and filed a counter-motion to appoint a child privilege attorney, citing the father's abusive behavior.

After McManus joined the case, the father neither participated in the court proceedings nor cooperated with the privilege attorney. Seeing that, as well as the evidence of abuse, the judge gave Jones full custody of both children along with the discretion to determine if and when the children would have access to their father.

The father made a last-ditch effort before the order took effect to change custody and suspend his child support payments. However, the judge ruled in favor of McManus' motions to dismiss both possibilities, awarding Jones full custody of both children and restoring her peace of mind regarding her children's safety.

\*This is not the individual's real name.



**2,054** individuals received assistance with child custody matters



**1,668** empowered individuals

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking received legal support, impacting the wellbeing of over **4,000** household members





**“When I came to  
MLA, all I knew  
was that I wanted  
to be free,  
and Jeff Kaplan really helped  
me achieve that. He helped  
my case tremendously.”**



**5,018** individuals  
received family services,  
providing legal assistance  
in family law matters

## ENDURANCE AND JUSTICE

In February 2019, Fiona Johnson,\* who has multiple sclerosis and is unable to work because of the degenerative disease, came to Maryland Legal Aid for help with her divorce.

She had been married for almost 20 years and had endured years of physical and verbal abuse from her husband. But when Johnson discovered her husband's infidelities, he told his wife to move out of the couple's home, which they owned jointly, to allow his girlfriend and her family to move in.

Johnson's only support was her monthly Social Security disability income of \$1,100. Yet, her husband forced her out without any more financial considerations. Johnson could afford only a single room for \$650 monthly in a small home where four people shared one bathroom.

Since she could no longer work, Johnson could not afford an attorney, but she wanted to live independently, so she turned to MLA and was helped by the persistence and tenacity of Chief Attorney Jeff Kaplan.

It was a long and drawn-out case, not only because of the COVID-19 pandemic but also because the husband refused to comply with the court decisions.

Finally, after a yearlong delay, Johnson's husband was ordered to either pay Johnson \$50,000 for her share of the marital home or sell the house and give Johnson 85% of the proceeds.

When the deadline came, Johnson's husband refused to move and did not refinance the mortgage to pay the \$50,000, despite having the financial ability to do so.

Kaplan hired a realtor to sell the house, but the husband repeatedly stalled the process. Stubbornly, her ex-husband also abdicated all homeowner responsibilities, refusing to pay water bills, taxes and environmental violations. The house deteriorated, and a year later, Johnson received only \$30,000 when it was sold.

Kaplan and MLA's new staff attorney, Michael Braunstein, thought justice had not been served, so they reopened the case and argued that the ex-husband should be held responsible for his actions.

Finally, after three years, Johnson was recently awarded an additional judgment of \$28,000 against her ex-husband.

\*This is not the individual's real name.





## PRESERVING HOME AND HOPE: CATHERYN'S STORY

In the winter of 2023, Catheryn sought help from Maryland Legal Aid to save her home in Annapolis. As a disabled veteran who used a VA loan to buy her house, she fell behind on mortgage payments due to issues with Navy Federal Credit Union and ongoing health problems. Despite the looming threat of foreclosure, Catheryn approached MLA before the mediation deadline expired.

Supervising Attorney William "Bill" Steinwedel took swift action, guiding Catheryn through the Maryland Homeowners Assistance Fund (HAF) application process. With Steinwedel's help, Catheryn secured \$11,978.22 in HAF funds, enough to cover her mortgage arrearages. With financial support and MLA's backing, Catheryn presented a compelling case to the court, leading to the dismissal of the foreclosure case and withdrawal of her mediation request.



**465** foreclosure cases handled

The collaboration between Catheryn and Attorney Steinwedel not only saved her home but also brought hope and stability to her life.

Steinwedel's dedication recognized Catheryn's service as a disabled veteran, prioritizing her well-being. With foreclosure averted, Catheryn could focus on rebuilding her life, supported by MLA and the HAF funds, paving the way for a more secure future.



# ADVOCATES IN ACTION: 2023 IMPACT CASES

Maryland Legal Aid attorneys have a long tradition of impact work, including in the Supreme Courts of Maryland and the United States. Impact cases are part of our broader advocacy efforts and are crucial to create fairer and more equitable policies and systems. These cases go beyond one individual client to affect a group of individuals, the legal system, or society.

## WESTMINSTER MANAGEMENT, LLC, V. TENAE SMITH

In August 2023, MLA, with a coalition of nonprofit organizations across the state, filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Court of Maryland on behalf of vulnerable low-income tenants facing eviction. This case involved a legal dispute with Westminster Management’s broad interpretation of the word “rent” in residential leases, claiming it encompassed other costs, such as eviction and other expenses. The coalition challenged this view, emphasizing the potential harm to vulnerable tenants, including homelessness and various hardships, if the Court were to adopt Westminster’s broad definition of rent. The Supreme Court of Maryland recently ruled in favor of the tenant appellant concurring with the argument MLA made in its amicus brief.

## UNITED STATES V. RAHIMI

In August 2023, MLA joined the Texas Advocacy Project and a coalition of dedicated nonprofit organizations across the nation in filing an amicus brief in US v. Rahimi. The brief was in support of ensuring the safety and protection of domestic violence survivors through appropriate firearm regulations. By joining forces to submit this critical amicus brief, Maryland Legal Aid aims to correct the misinterpretation of the law and advocate for the continued protection of domestic violence survivors.

## MLA SEEKS TO PROTECT DISABLED SENIOR CITIZENS IN BALTIMORE FROM DANGEROUS AND ILLEGAL PRACTICES

In August 2023, Maryland Legal Aid filed a lawsuit in Baltimore City Circuit Court on behalf of senior citizens, including individuals with disabilities and a veteran, residing in unlicensed properties. The properties have numerous safety and housing code violations, including rodent infestation, water damage, mold, and fire hazards. As a result of the defendants’ actions and failure to maintain their properties, the senior citizens living in these properties have experienced a range of health issues, both physical and mental, including depression, anxiety, and heightened stress. The lawsuit seeks to hold the landlords accountable for violating rental license laws and failing to provide safe and decent housing for the plaintiff.



Are you interested in  
better understanding  
the impact cases  
we’ve discussed?

VISIT  
[MDLAB.org/impact-cases](https://MDLAB.org/impact-cases)





## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS!



## PRO BONO PROGRAM

MLA's Pro Bono Program gives attorneys outside of our staff the opportunity to volunteer and learn new areas of law through participation in our legal clinics, training, MLA's task forces, and mentorship programs.

In 2023, 199 pro bono attorneys provided legal assistance to clients in need throughout the state. These volunteers are essential to help us meet the need our clients have for vital legal services and we are grateful for their willingness to help.

- |                      |                      |                      |                       |                    |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Paul Ackerman        | Aaron DeGraffenreidt | Kaitlyn Holzer       | Maryse Mills-Apenteng | Daniel Rosenberg   |
| Trevor Addie         | Nastashia Dickerson  | Genevieve Hornik     | Kevin Minsky          | Peter Rosenwald    |
| Alexa Ain            | Andrea Dodrill       | Michael Huber        | Searle Mitnick        | Alec Royka         |
| Colin Albaugh        | Michael Dowling      | Abby Hurson          | Ashley C. Moore       | Krystle Sanders    |
| Jaelin Ali           | Erica Downie         | Daniel Hurson        | Carla Morgan          | Marisa Schnaith    |
| Christopher Anderson | Jordan Dunham        | Cheryl Hystad        | Frank Morgan          | Robert A. Scott    |
| Ader Andrews         | Nicole Durkin        | Chanaye Jackson      | Lauren Mullin         | Stephen Sherman    |
| Phil Andrews         | Raenetta Ellison     | Lyle F. Jones        | Jennifer Nance        | Syma Siddiqui      |
| Anson Asaka          | Stephen Elville      | Paula Junghans       | Christine Nell        | Hilton Silver      |
| Kerry Ates           | Alessandra Emmini    | Nashona Kess         | Ravna Nkwanvo         | Brandi Slye        |
| Yollette Atkinson    | Martina Evans        | Margaret L. Kessler  | James Nolan           | Jennifer S. Smith  |
| Rig Baldwin          | Melissa Feldhan      | Graham Kidner        | Jennifer Nwachukwu    | Eugene Souder      |
| Daniel Barry         | Larry J. Feldman     | Christian Kim        | Marybeth Orsini       | Joyce Stanley      |
| Alex Batton          | William Fields       | Gabrielle Kohlmeier  | Palskyte Orszulak     | Donna Staton       |
| Derek Baumgardner    | Sandra Fink          | Matthew Koning       | Chelsea Ortega        | Lauren Stettz      |
| Emily Bedoya         | Staci Fitzgerald     | Lauren Lake          | Matt Paavola          | Megan Sunderland   |
| Leena Beery          | Abbie Flanagan       | Gregory Lambros      | Jae Woo Park          | Timothy F. Swanson |
| Mary Blythe          | Jason Foltin         | Steffani Langston    | Jon Pearson           | Susan Testa        |
| Tiana Boardman       | Alisa Fornwald       | Lydia E. Lawless     | Joel L. Perrell, Jr.  | Beatrice C. Thomas |
| Catherine Bocskor    | Charles L. Fuller    | Allison Levin        | Joshua Perry          | Maria Tildon       |
| Brent Bolea          | Alexander Geraldo    | Michael Levin        | Amy Petkovsek         | Sakinah Tillman    |
| Michelle Bourque     | Katie L. Ghiardi     | Adam Levine          | Paul Pineau           | Molly Timko        |
| Robert Bradford      | Natalie Gibson       | Alicia D. Lewis      | Kaelia Plunkett       | Joshua Treem       |
| James Bragdon        | Michelle Gilman      | Isabel Lipman        | Jamine N. Pope        | Laura Venezia      |
| Alexander Bratton    | Joseph Githuku       | Scott Lloyd          | Sara Porsia           | Ebony Vincent      |
| Jacqueline Brooks    | Clifford B. Glover   | Cristine E. LoVetro  | Christopher Porter    | Kimberly Wagner    |
| Neal Brown           | Les Goldsborough     | Sara Lucas           | Patrick Preller       | Aaron Weiss        |
| Todd Cagwin          | Jessica M. Gorsky    | Jan Lukas            | Jo Price              | Andrew Will        |
| William Cameron      | Cymone Gosnell       | Tom Lynch            | Timothy Price         | Karen Willford     |
| Steven Campen        | Rachel Greenwald     | Lucy MacGabhann      | Hya Qasmieh           | Cameron Williams   |
| Kerri Cohen          | Patrick Hanlon       | John Marshall        | Jack Quinn            | Karen M. Williford |
| Renita Collins       | David Hansen         | Richard Martell      | Tyler Ralph           | Alicia Wilson      |
| Desmond Connall, Jr. | Michele F. Hanson    | Nicholas McDaniels   | David Ralph           | Kathleen Wobber    |
| Heidi Connolly       | Megan E. Harmon      | Robert McGarrah      | Morgan Rhoden         | Virginia Yeoman    |
| Catherine Cook       | Marilyn J. Harris    | Michelle McGeogh     | Ellen Rice            | Jennifer Young     |
| Delores Cooke        | Daniel Hatcher       | Patricia McLean      | Ned Richardson        | Jacob Ziff         |
| Stephen Craig        | Tiera Hawkes         | Kendrick McLeod      | Sharon Ritter Beall   | Danielle Zoller    |
| Denise Crisanti      | Margaret Henn        | Patrick McLister     | Stephanie Robinson    |                    |
| Kimberley Curry      | Brandyn Hicks        | Camilla McRory       | William L. Rodowsky   |                    |
| Jacob Dachs          | Charles Hirsch       | LaNita L. McWilliams | Katie Rodriguez       |                    |



***“Thank you so much. You have been a major help to my sanity.”***

– Ryan White Client

## THE RYAN WHITE PROJECT

Since 2012, the Ryan White Project has provided free legal services to Maryland residents who are HIV positive or who have AIDS. This service is available to all those who live in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, or Queen Anne’s counties. This year, we assisted 71 Ryan White Clients with 95 legal matters.

This crucial assistance addresses the legal needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and enables them to focus on their primary concern — staying healthy. MLA is committed to this life-changing work and protecting people from discrimination. Legal services, in combination with medical care and case management assistance, are crucial to the well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS.

“Lawyers have a license to practice law, a monopoly on certain services. But for that privilege and status, lawyers have an obligation to provide legal services to those without the wherewithal to pay, to respond to needs outside themselves, to help repair tears in their communities.”

– U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (March 2014)

## NEW LAWYER TRAINING

As the state’s largest provider of free, direct legal services, we not only offer a comprehensive benefits package that’s market-competitive we also work hard to keep our employees on a path to success through our training programs.

In 2023, MLA offered its extensive, hands-on New Lawyer Training program focused on developing and improving litigation skills. This year, we added a writing component to the training. Between seminars and practical exercises, the attorneys received invaluable feedback from seasoned lawyers at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Marriottsville. The culminating event was a mock trial that enabled participants to engage in trial proceedings and receive valuable critiques from our guest judges.



**71** Ryan White Clients were assisted with **95** legal matters

“The Ryan White program allows a person overcoming the unique treatment of HIV to have wraparound services when navigating the equally essential aspects of life — particularly maintaining housing stability, reducing employment barriers, and obtaining entitlement benefits — that support a person’s foundation to being able to thrive. Maryland Legal Aid is gratefully part of that support.”

– Administrative Law Unit Chief Attorney Christina Moore



## COMMUNITY LAWYERING INITIATIVE

Maryland Legal Aid’s Community Lawyering Initiative places highly skilled lawyers directly in under-served neighborhoods to provide free,

life-changing legal assistance. Through these community-based clinics, we have grown our presence in the community. These clinics, staffed by MLA’s attorneys and paralegals along with pro bono attorneys and law students, help people access legal assistance right in their own community.

Community advocacy is a strategic approach to influencing outcomes and driving change on behalf of the community. The Community Lawyering Initiative includes weekly and monthly expungement clinics coordinated and hosted with community organizations from around the State!



**2,160** individuals provided legal assistance



**281** community-based clinics hosted



**1,112** cases opened through community based clinics



## ALL STAFF & BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

Maryland Legal Aid’s staff and board members took the strategic planning process to the next level in 2023, going off-site to Ocean City to sort through the months of tremendously demanding work done by its strategic planning workgroups and the committee.

The staff presented their recommendations about what our strategic direction should be both for our substantive legal work and for our organizational culture and development. Our staff and board also gave feedback on our new mission, vision, and values statements.

It was an engaging retreat with lots of listening, learning, sharing, team building, and growing. There were also two awards handed out. Congratulations to:

Arlene Callender, chief attorney for the Cecil/Harford Office, received the Charlie Award, named after Charles H. Dorsey, Jr. It is given to someone who exemplifies the mission and values of MLA through extraordinary caring and support for clients and colleagues.

Kyle Coleman, a staff attorney in the Housing Consumer Unit from the Baltimore City Office, was given the Diane Kinslow Award, named for our CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) staff attorney. Coleman was recognized for demonstrating courage and compassion in his services to our clients.

## MCLA UPDATE

The Court Help Centers are part of a project run with the support of the Maryland Judiciary by the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance (MCLA), a wholly-owned subsidiary of MLA. With a call center in Annapolis that serves the entire state, MCLA helps fill the justice gap by serving self-represented litigants and referring eligible people to MLA and other legal services programs. The Maryland District Court Help Center walk-in locations are in Baltimore City, Cambridge, Catonsville, Glen Burnie, Hagerstown, Rockville, Salisbury, and Upper Marlboro; and the Circuit Court Help Centers walk-in locations are in Frederick and La Plata.



## MCLA LEADERSHIP

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Tommy Fisher, Esq.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
FOR REMOTE SERVICES  
Lindsay Bramble, Esq.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
FOR WALK-IN SERVICES  
Alyssa Patzoldt, Esq.



**176,461** visitors assisted by the Maryland Courts Help and District Court Help Centers in 2023

**662** pro bono hours worked

**1,314** litigants assisted



## EQUAL JUSTICE ASSOCIATES

The Equal Justice Associates (EJA) is a group of young lawyers who serve as ambassadors on behalf of MLA to help meet the need for civil legal assistance among Marylanders with low income. EJA members organize and participate in meaningful pro bono opportunities; collaborate with influential leaders of the legal community; organize fun and engaging networking activities; receive high-quality training and mentoring in a variety of practice areas and gain valuable experience in the courtroom and working with clients.

### EJA LEADERSHIP

Co-Chair: Darryl L. Tarver

Co-Chair: Ernie Dominguez

Secretary: Aaron DeGraffenreidt

Treasurer: Alicia Shelton

Member-At-Large: Megan E. Davis

Pro Bono Chair: Joanna Diamond

## EQUAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

The Equal Justice Council (EJC) is a group of influential leaders in Maryland's legal and business communities who lend their time, expertise, and counsel to Maryland Legal Aid in a variety of ways. Established in 1997, its primary goal is to promote equal access to justice by increasing and diversifying MLA's resources, financial and otherwise, and serving as advocates and ambassadors on behalf of MLA. EJC members raise funds from the private bar and business community through the annual Campaign for Equal Justice, as well as promoting pro bono involvement, providing expertise for MLA's training programs, and cultivating relationships with key stakeholders. In 2023, Lee Ogburn stepped down from his role as EJC Co-Chair after successfully leading the group alongside Marty Himeles since 2015, and Michelle McGeogh was announced as the new Co-Chair.

### EJC LEADERSHIP

Martin S. Himeles, Jr. (Co-Chair)

Michelle M. McGeogh (Co-Chair)

Lee H. Ogburn (Immediate Past Co-Chair)

## SENIOR LAWYER CORPS

In 2023, Maryland Legal Aid established the Senior Lawyer Corps (SLC), a specialized group comprising retired or semi-retired lawyers who collaborate with MLA to provide valuable legal expertise and support. The SLC brings an innovative approach to enhancing MLA's capacity to serve clients and communities while offering meaningful and rewarding work to senior lawyers.

SLC members bring their experience and wisdom to help ensure equal access to justice with mentorship, training support, representing MLA in the legal community and co-counseling on complex litigation.

If you are interested in learning more or joining the Senior Lawyer Corps, contact Graham Cowger, Director of Development, at [gcowger@mdlaborg](mailto:gcowger@mdlaborg) or 410-951-7706.

### FOUNDING MEMBERS

The Honorable  
Susan K. Gauvey  
Albert J. Matricciani, Jr.  
M. Natalie McSherry  
Lee H. Ogburn

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Jose F. Anderson  
Andre M. Davis  
Harry S. Johnson  
Paula M. Junghans  
Susan P. Leviton  
Thomas E. Lynch III  
John M. Quinn  
Carol E. Smith  
Joshua R. Treem

## MANAGING PARTNERS' BREAKFAST

On Wednesday, October 11, Maryland Legal Aid and the Equal Justice Council held the Managing Partners' Meeting at Ballard Spahr's new office in Baltimore. More than two dozen leaders of the private bar in Maryland gathered over coffee and breakfast to learn about MLA's vision for expanding access to justice for underserved Marylanders and for partnering with the private bar to pursue that goal. Members also heard about the transformative impact MLA has had on clients, and the new strategic plan in the works. Special thanks to Ballard Spahr and members of the EJC, for hosting a wonderful meeting.

# EQUAL JUSTICE COUNCIL AWARDS BREAKFAST

On Tuesday, May 16, Maryland Legal Aid’s Equal Justice Council (EJC) hosted its 24th Annual Equal Justice Awards Breakfast at the Lord Baltimore Hotel. This annual event honors and recognizes the individuals, law firms and community partners that are helping to ensure that all Marylanders have a fair shot at justice. Governor Wes Moore was the keynote speaker.

Lee H. Ogburn, Esq. and Warren S. Oliveri, Jr., Esq. received the Exemplar of Equal Justice Award for their exceptional dedication and exemplary service in support of MLA’s mission. As President of MLA’s Board of Directors for more than three decades, Warren Oliveri oversaw an astounding level of growth for Maryland Legal Aid and led the organization through countless challenges and accomplishments. Lee

Ogburn’s outstanding leadership and many years of service as Co-Chair of Maryland Legal Aid’s Equal Justice Council has also been exemplary, as he worked to strengthen the private bar’s support of MLA while providing significant pro bono support, and much more. Over the years, their multifaceted efforts and extraordinary commitment to advancing MLA’s mission have done so much to improve the health, safety, and financial stability of our most vulnerable neighbors.

This year’s Executive Director’s Award was presented to Ward B. Coe III, Esq. And Reena K. Shah, Esq. of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission. Mr. Coe and Mrs. Shah have been tireless in their efforts to level the legal playing field for disadvantaged Marylanders. Further, their thoughtful,

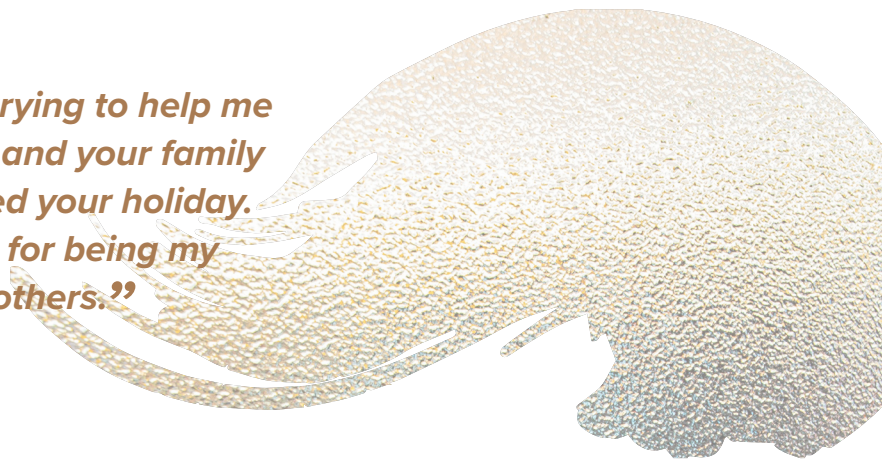
effective leadership of the Commission has helped ensure that Marylanders with low-income can access legal assistance and protect their rights amid the unprecedented challenges of the last few years.

Additional honorees included Thread and Loyola University Maryland (Community Partner for Justice Award); Ballard Spahr LLP and Association of Corporate Counsel - National Capital Region (Pro Bono Partner of the Year Award); and The Honorable Pamela J. White (Most Valuable Partner of the Year Award).



***“Thank you, Donna, for always trying to help me when I contact you. I hope you and your family are doing well, and truly enjoyed your holiday. May God continue to bless you for being my angel, and I am sure for many others.”***

**—With Love, Ms. M.**



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***“You are superlative! I so appreciate your assistance and that of Maryland Legal Aid.***

***Through the pain, fear, stress, depression and anxiety of losing my housing, you helped me. When no one believed or was willing to listen and help. Thank you, almost seems an inadequate statement, but thank you so much!”***

***—Sincerely, Ms. H.***

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 Beilul Golfin Byrd  
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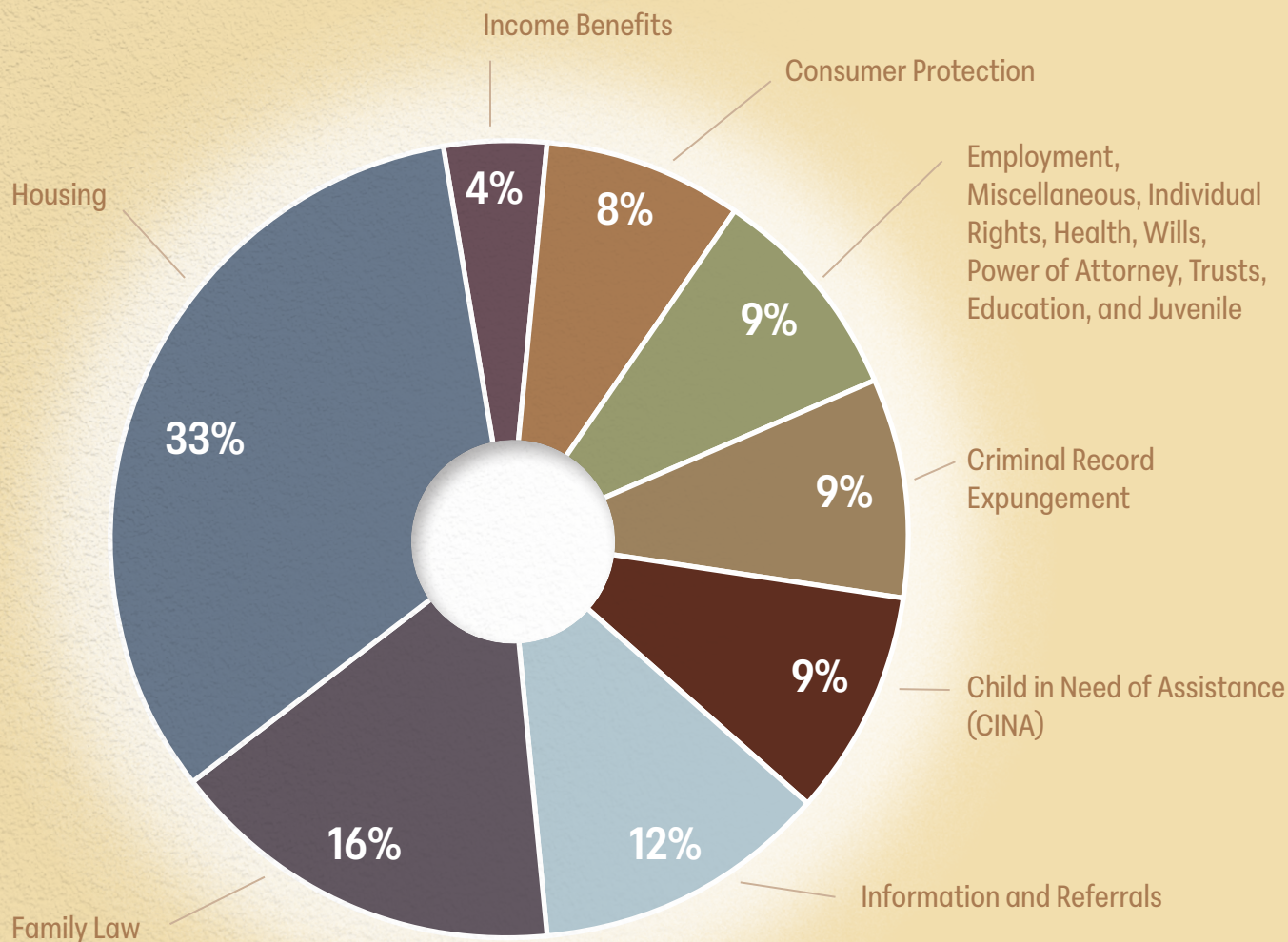
**VOLUNTEERS**

Castell Abner, Jr.  
 Noah Appel  
 Cynthia Fenimore  
 Autumn Gilliam  
 Marilyn Harris  
 Teresa Iannoconi  
 Jaia R. Lloyd  
 Rob McGarrah  
 Marilyn Ogburn  
 Alexander Randle-  
 Johnson

**LAW CLERKS & INTERNS**

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 Ravinder Assi  
 Jonathan Biedler  
 Alaina Blechinger  
 Kathleen B. Cully  
 Rose Delury  
 Brenda A. Hurford  
 Hung Huynh  
 Cyrus W. Jarrett, Jr.  
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 Kaitlyn A. Lavella  
 Lauren Matcha  
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 Nataly K. Reyes  
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 Melanie West

# 2023 CLIENT CASE TYPES



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Maryland Legal Aid  
Resource Development Unit  
500 E. Lexington Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

### GIFTS OF STOCK

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Account #78352614

### WORKPLACE GIVING

United Way: 54  
Maryland Charity Campaign: 520591621  
Combined Federal Campaign: 15755

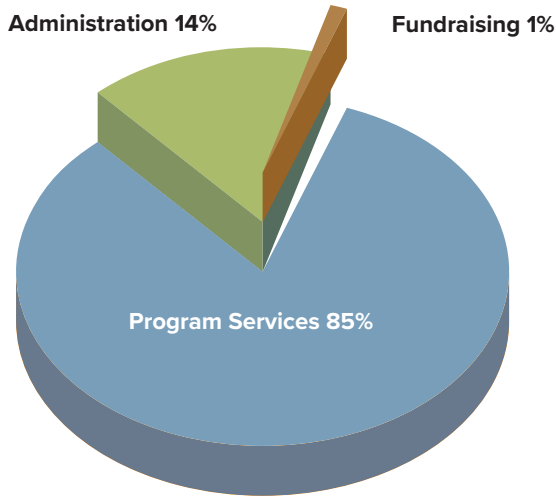
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Include a charitable gift to MLA in your will with a call to your lawyer.

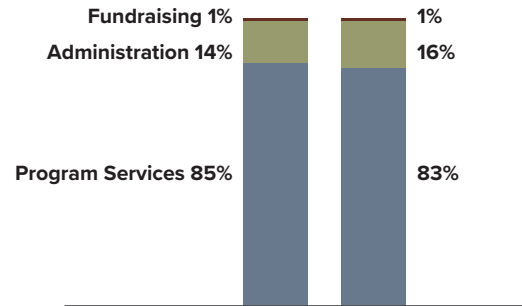
For more information, contact  
Director of Development, Graham Cowger,  
at [gcowger@mdlab.org](mailto:gcowger@mdlab.org) or 410-951-7706.

# 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

## EXPENDITURE ALLOCATION



## 2023 vs 2022



## REVENUES AND SUPPORT

TOTAL REVENUES AND SUPPORT (Without and With Donor Restrictions)	\$30,220,532
Total Operating Expenses	\$39,009,369
Changes in Net Assets	(\$8,788,837)
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$25,926,444</b>

### SELECTED FUNDING SOURCES

Legal Services Corporation	\$6,962,115
Maryland Legal Services Corporation	\$12,740,765
Government and other contracts	\$13,502,748
Net investment (loss) gain and other income	\$1,284,331
Individual contributions and foundations	\$1,097,741

COUNTY	MLA CASES	MLA PERSONS SERVED	MCLA MATTERS HANDLED*
Allegany	821	719	854
Anne Arundel	1,139	999	27,483*
Baltimore City	10,893	9,103	24,031
Baltimore County	4,056	3,431	22,906
Calvert	321	265	1,523
Caroline	150	137	424
Carroll	481	374	1,681
Cecil	448	394	1,811
Charles	948	793	5,742
Dorchester	142	121	870
Frederick	1,389	1,123	9,267
Garrett	223	200	154
Harford	1,006	884	2,590
Howard	641	562	4,947
Kent	95	83	139
Montgomery	3,523	2,923	21,476
Prince George's	949	764	29,654
Queen Anne's	5,459	4,376	452
St. Mary's	134	119	1,645
Somerset	173	153	572
Talbot	482	413	427
Washington	124	108	3,056
Wicomico	887	745	4,785
Worcester	615	549	1,057
Out of State	250	221	714
Undetermined	257	252	8,201
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,606</b>	<b>29,811</b>	<b>176,461</b>

This report contains a summary of 2023 financial information and of selected sources of funding received. Complete audited financial statements are available from Maryland Legal Aid upon request.

The Legal Aid Bureau, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides free civil legal services to low-income people in every Maryland community. A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request by calling our office: (410) 951-7719. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, for the cost of copying and mailing.

All funds received by the Legal Aid Bureau, Inc. are spent in accordance with the Legal Services Corporation Act of 1974, as amended 1977, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2996 et. seq., its implementing regulations, 45 C.F.R. § 1600 et. seq., and other applicable law.

\* Anne Arundel served an additional 8,418 persons through the Anne Arundel Family Law Self Help Center.

Maryland Legal Aid  
500 East Lexington Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

[mdlab.org](http://mdlab.org)



## MARYLAND LEGAL AID OFFICE LOCATIONS

### Allegheny/Garrett

138 Baltimore Street  
Suite 204  
Cumberland, MD 21502

### Anne Arundel/Howard

2024 West Street  
Suite 204,  
Annapolis, MD 21401

3451 Court House Drive  
2nd Floor  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

### Baltimore City

500 E. Lexington Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

### Baltimore County

215 Washington Avenue  
Suite 305  
Towson, MD 21204

### Cecil/Harford

103 S. Hickory Avenue  
Bel Air, MD 21014

### Lower Eastern Shore

Dorchester, Somerset,  
Wicomico, Worcester  
201 E. Main Street  
Salisbury, MD 21801

### Midwestern Maryland

Carroll, Frederick, Washington  
22 S. Market Street  
Suite 11  
Frederick, MD 21701

### Montgomery County

600 Jefferson Plaza  
Suite 430  
Rockville, MD 20852

### Prince George's County

8401 Corporate Drive  
Suite 200  
Landover, MD 20785

### Southern Maryland

Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's  
15045 Burnt Store Road  
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