



Community
Legal Aid



Ripples of Justice

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends & Supporters,

As I reflect on 2023, I am extremely proud of the profound impact that Community Legal Aid's dedicated attorneys, paralegals, case managers, support staff, and pro bono volunteers have had on the lives of the thousands of low-income and elderly people we served in Central and Western Massachusetts.

The past year had its share of challenges. The public at large frequently heard talk about the housing crisis and about the plight of newcomers arriving in our region. While many of us watched these events unfold from a distance, Community Legal Aid and our subsidiary, the Central West Justice Center, were on the front lines, meeting with clients and hearing story after story of individual hardship. Our advocates were deeply involved in the efforts to support new arrivals and those affected by the housing crisis, and many others facing a variety of critical legal issues.

While representing individual clients lies at the heart of our work, we are also proud of the advocacy efforts which had a broader impact in our communities. You will read in this report about cases that not only served our immediate clients but also addressed policies and practices that affected many more people. Through our broad-reaching advocacy efforts, we are working to dismantle systemic barriers and ensure that our clients—and those in similar situations—have fair access to resources and opportunities.

In my 25 years in legal aid, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of legal advocacy for many of our most vulnerable neighbors and have seen how far-reaching its impact can be. As Robert F. Kennedy said, "Each time [someone] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, [they] send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Together with the support of our funders, donors, partners, and volunteers, we will continue standing up for our low-income and elderly neighbors—sending forth **ripples of justice** to the thousands of clients whom we serve.

Thank you for your continued support and for being a part of the fight for justice for all.



With deep appreciation,

Jonathan Mannina, Esq.
Executive Director, Community Legal Aid, Inc.

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2023 in Numbers



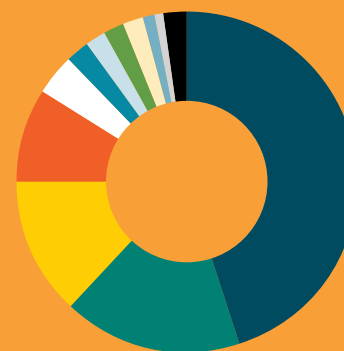
CASES HANDLED

8,273
Total cases

6,263
Total CLA cases

2,010
Total Central West Justice Center cases*

AREAS OF PRACTICE



POPULATION SERVED

INCOME
77% Up to 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines†

17% Between 125% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines

6% Over 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines‡

LANGUAGE
25% Primary language other than English (over 30 languages)

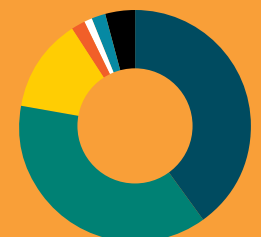
AGE
21% 60 and older

73% 19-59 years

6% Under 19 years

GENDER
68% Female identified | 31% Male identified
1% Gender not identified

ETHNICITY



Federal Poverty Guidelines (2023)

† 125%: Pre-tax annual income of \$18,225 for an individual or \$37,500 for a family of four

‡ 200%: Pre-tax annual income of \$29,160 for an individual or \$60,000 for a family of four

* CLA's wholly-owned subsidiary, the Central West Justice Center (CWJC), receives no funding from the Legal Services Corporation.

Education Law Unit

Helping Students Thrive

CLA's Education Law Unit helps students from low-income families access the education to which they are entitled. The unit's advocates provide legal assistance around issues of special education, school discipline, bullying, language access, and protections for students experiencing homelessness. The unit also conducts presentations to community groups and agencies that work with youth to help students and their guardians understand their education-related legal rights.

CLIENT CASE

Matthew's Story

Last winter, CLA Staff Attorney Molly Jane Thoms led a training for staff from the Brien Center, a non-profit social services organization in the Berkshires. The next day, Attorney Thoms received a call from one of the Brien Center's caseworkers and heard about Matthew for the first time.

Matthew was thirteen and had lived in Berkshire County his whole life. Over five years ago, his public school district placed Matthew at a private special education school due to his social and emotional needs. While he originally thrived in this program, something changed in the fall of 2022. His grandmother and legal guardian, Deanna, started getting calls from the school saying his behavior was uncontrollable and she had to come pick him up. Matthew was even suspended a few times. In February 2023, with no process or warning, the school informed Deanna and the district that he was not allowed to return.

Fortunately, Matthew started at a new school the following month. Since then, he has been making remarkable progress. But his family wasn't ready to turn their back on his challenging experiences. In particular, Matthew continued to express concerns about friends who still attended his former school.

In investigating the situation, Attorney Thoms discovered that personnel at his former school had physically restrained Matthew on a regular basis. His family had not been notified about most of the restraints, in violation of numerous state regulations. The school had also violated his procedural rights related to school discipline and termination of placement.

With Attorney Thoms assisting her, Deanna decided to file a complaint with the state education agency, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The school was unable to refute any facts the complaint alleged. The case was ultimately resolved through an agreement between the family and the school that achieved Deanna's two primary goals: to bring attention to Matthew's experience at the school and ensure increased oversight of this school by the Office of Approved Special Education Schools, which is a branch of DESE.

Throughout the process, Attorney Thoms' advocacy was fueled by Deanna's desire to ensure other students would not experience what Matthew did. Deanna feels strongly that schools responsible for educating vulnerable children like Matthew must remain transparent and accountable to the communities they serve.

Attorney Molly Jane Thoms with Matthew

Employment Unit

CLA's Advocacy Helps Thousands of Workers

Last year, CLA settled a pandemic-era lawsuit against the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), the state agency that administers unemployment insurance benefits in Massachusetts.

In the case, **Marrero et al. v. Jeffers**, CLA represented five low-income workers who lost their jobs in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initially, DUA approved the workers' unemployment insurance (UI) claims and began paying them weekly benefits. But later, DUA claimed it was "overwhelmed" by the number of pandemic-driven UI claims. So, without notice or a hearing, DUA suddenly placed workers' claims on

"hold," and stopped paying them weekly benefits. DUA even demanded that some workers repay thousands of dollars in benefits that they had already spent on rent, food, and other necessities.

This left workers in an untenable state of limbo: they could not appeal, because their claims remained officially "approved," but DUA had stopped paying their weekly benefits.

CLA's clients were not alone. DUA had placed thousands of workers' UI claims on hold, which left numerous Massachusetts families without resources to pay bills and buy food.

In late 2020, CLA sued DUA in Worcester Superior Court. In March 2021, CLA obtained a preliminary injunction that ordered DUA to resume paying weekly benefits, providing CLA's clients, along with thousands of other unemployed workers state-wide, with the benefits they desperately needed during the height of the pandemic.

Due to CLA's victory in obtaining the preliminary injunction, DUA agreed to settle the remainder of the case. Under the settlement, DUA promulgated new regulations (430 CMR 11.00) that preserve policy and system changes made based on the preliminary injunction. DUA also agreed to pay \$50,000 to compensate CLA for its attorneys' work on the Marrero case.



"CLA's victory in this case reaffirms that DUA—and other government agencies—exist to help the people of the Commonwealth. So, when people need that help, it is absolutely unlawful for a state agency to halt benefits or services, claiming that the need is too great or the problem too big. The Constitution and other laws continue to apply during times of crisis. That is the lesson of this victory."

—ATTORNEY LEIGH WOODRUFF, CLA's Litigation Director

CLIENT VOICES

CLA's clients explain the hardships that they and their family members suffered because of the DUA's actions.



Allyson has worked in Massachusetts for 35 years, most recently in payroll. To make ends meet, Allyson had to go on food stamps, cash out her 401k, and max out her credit cards. She also fell behind in rent and had to borrow money from her children, which caused her shame and embarrassment.

"My quality of life has dramatically declined as a result of not receiving these benefits. It has affected my mental, physical, and emotional well-being. [It] has driven me to the brink of poverty, and has caused me emotional and financial harm that will take years, if ever, to recover from."



Cassandra, a single mother and the sole caretaker for her eight-year-old daughter, worked as a registered nurse. When the DUA stopped paying her weekly benefits, she was unable to make payments for her rent, car, internet service and electricity, which cut her daughter off from attending school remotely. She worried her credit would be destroyed.

"The unexpected termination of my benefits has been devastating—mentally, financially, and physically—for me and my family"

"I am worried my child and I may end up homeless, without my car or credit intact. I am worried that everything I have worked so hard to accomplish and to build is falling apart."

"The magnitude of the stress is hard to even communicate. It pervades every facet of my life. It is affecting my relationships, my parenting, and my physical and mental well-being."

Jefrie worked as a machine operator, assembler, and maintenance crew member. Deprived of UI benefits, Jefrie fell behind on rent, child support and other bills, which caused him and his family to incur substantial credit card debt. He and his partner incurred fees for late auto loan and insurance payments, damaging their credit scores.

"During the time period [without my UI benefits] ... my family and I were under great stress and anxiety. I personally suffered depression, emotional distress, and deep concern for my family's future and well-being."



Making a Broader Impact with Appellate Litigation

Community Legal Aid is committed to working on cases that benefit a broad group of people who face common issues. By doing so, we magnify the impact of our work.

In 2023, CLA won important victories in two appellate cases that provide significant protections for tenants and domestic violence survivors in our communities. By successfully arguing the cases at the appellate level, CLA helped tenants and survivors across the state.

In the case of **Quilla Q. v. Matt M., 102 Mass. App. Ct. 244 (2023)**, CLA helped ensure that courts provide domestic violence survivors with all the relief that they are seeking and are entitled to under the law.

CLA's client, Quilla,* requested child support at an abuse prevention order hearing in the District Court. Like many survivors of domestic violence, Quilla needed immediate financial support to allow her to escape the abuse. However, the judge told her to make the request for child support in the Probate and Family Court instead, causing months of delay before the

support could begin. On appeal, CLA Senior Supervising Attorney Christina Paradiso argued that the law requires that judges must, when requested, consider child support as part of an abuse prevention order under Mass. General Law Chapter 209A.

The Massachusetts Appeals Court agreed that the request for child support should have been considered at the time the District Court extended the abuse prevention order. "Referring a plaintiff to another court may discourage the person from seeking the relief to which they are entitled under the law and may expose the person to additional danger," the Court stated.

The decision provides clarity and a reminder that achieving physical safety often requires economic independence.

"The primary goal of Chapter 209A is abuse prevention, but the law also provides for broad relief, including financial support orders. Without this support, people are often forced to choose between providing basic needs for their children by staying in an abusive situation and ensuring physical safety."

—SENIOR SUPERVISING ATTORNEY CHRISTINA PARADISO



In **Ferreira v. Charland, 103 Mass. App. Ct. 194 (2023)**, CLA Staff Attorney Gabriel Fonseca not only helped a client avoid eviction, but also won an appellate decision reinforcing the Legislature's efforts to provide strong statutory protections to tenants in Massachusetts.

CLA represented a tenant, Laural Charland, in a no-fault eviction. The main issue in the case was whether the landlord's payment of money to remedy a violation of law meant that the tenant could no longer pursue a defense under Mass. General Law Chapter 239, §8A to stay in the rental unit.

In ruling that such a payment would not wipe out the tenant's defense, the majority of the Massachusetts Appeals Court noted that a contrary ruling "would be undermining the Legislature's efforts to strengthen a tenant's right to avoid eviction."

"This decision did not change the statute; it simply enforced [the law] as written and intended by the Massachusetts Legislature. Tenants have legal rights and protections, too, and the Appeals Court simply reaffirmed and enforced one of those existing protections."

—ATTORNEY GABRIEL FONSECA



Ferreira was also the Appeals Court's first *en banc* decision under a pilot program launched in the fall of 2022. Under the program, a judge may call for a case to be heard *en banc* (by the full Appeals Court of 25 justices) if the proceeding involves one or more questions of "exceptional importance." The Ferreira case was originally argued to a three-judge Appeals Court panel, and then reheard by the full bench of the Appeals Court.

"I am writing to say Gabriel was a [godsend] to us. I don't know what we would have done ... without him. It was a very, very stressful few years. If I didn't understand something he explained everything to me.

I want to thank everyone for their help. I also want you to know how grateful I am for Gabriel's hard work.

Anyone needing representation will be very, very lucky to have Gabriel as their attorney."

- Laural Charland



Expansion of CLA Veterans Unit Staff



In 2023, U.S. Air Force Veteran Isaac (“Zeke”) Kennen joined CLA as a Staff Attorney in its Veterans Unit. The Unit provides comprehensive legal assistance to Veterans and their families involving housing, Veteran-specific benefits, family law, access to healthcare, character of service determinations, and discharge status issues.

Working with Veterans in Hampden and Hampshire Counties, Attorney Kennen focuses primarily on eviction defense, intervening before at-risk Veterans

end up on the street or in shelters. The position is funded for one year by the Legal Services for Veterans program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Veterans returning home after service often face civil legal problems as they re-integrate into their families and communities. Unfortunately, many of their issues cannot be properly remedied without the assistance of an attorney to navigate the complex laws and systems that administer Veteran-specific benefits and programs.

**The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.*

CLA began providing Veteran-specific services in 2017. The Unit includes Staff Attorneys Uri Strauss in Hampshire County and Noah Meister in Worcester County. CLA appreciates funding for its Veteran-based work from the United Way of the Franklin & Hampshire Region and the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation as well as the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Bringing free legal assistance to Veterans who cannot otherwise afford private attorneys will help address the complex social factors that affect Veterans’ health and well-being.”

—ATTORNEY ZEKE KENNEN



Attorney Isaac “Zeke” Kennen served for 25 years in the U.S. Air Force on assignments throughout the U.S. and overseas, and brings a wealth of experience to his new role.



CLIENT CASE

Jim’s Story

“Jim” is an elderly Veteran who served on active duty during the Vietnam war.

He was referred to CLA by the Tenancy Preservation Program, a homelessness prevention program that helps tenants preserve their housing. Jim was facing possible eviction due to non-payment of rent for the efficiency unit where he had lived for the last fifteen years. After the landlord upgraded the unit, Jim’s rent

jumped by over 100%, which he could not afford. After nearly a year, Jim had fallen behind in rent by thousands of dollars, and, with his limited income, had no way to pay it.

To preserve Jim’s housing, Attorney Uri Strauss first turned to finding programs that could help Jim pay the back rent he owed. Along with Housing Unit Case Manager Ashley Stone, Attorney Strauss worked with several different organizations to get nearly all of Jim’s back rent paid off. This helped to stop his eviction, but Jim also needed help in order to stay in his housing.

Attorney Strauss then worked with several agencies, including the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-

VASH) program, to get Jim a voucher to help pay for his housing going forward. With the voucher, Jim can afford to continue living in his current apartment.

Providing Jim with the holistic services CLA can offer, Attorney Strauss also connected Jim with CLA’s Elder Unit. A paralegal in the unit provided Jim with information about trying to reinstate his Veterans’ benefits from the state and increasing his SNAP (formerly called “Food Stamps”). The paralegal also provided Jim with additional resources available for elders in his area.



CORI/Re-entry Unit Expands Its Initiatives

Advocacy Helps Reduce Barriers for Returning Community Members

Persons recently released from incarceration, and those with criminal records, face many challenges including barriers to housing, employment, and other opportunities. Last year, the CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information)/Re-entry Unit helped over 200 people expunge and seal their records and challenge denials of housing, employment, and

educational programs. In addition to serving individuals with criminal record-related issues, Unit Supervisor Attorney Alyssa Golden and her team provide on-site intake hours at multiple community partner agency locations. They also conduct “Know Your Rights” trainings for community members and staff at direct service organizations.

Last summer, CLA’s CORI/Re-entry Unit expanded its initiatives to help reduce barriers for community members with criminal record-related issues. CLA launched an outreach campaign as part of an effort to let people know their rights regarding sealing and expungement of criminal record information.



Members of the CORI/Re-entry team photographed in December 2023. Front (L-R) Cristina Jamba, Delilah Kline, Annie Connor. Back (L-R) Roy Harris Jr., Alyssa Golden, Emma McEvoy

CLIENT CASE

Jessi’s Story

In one case handled by CLA’s CORI/Re-entry Unit, Staff Attorney Annie Maurer was able to help “Jessi,” a young mother in recovery, remove barriers to employment.

Jessi sought employment as a home health aide but was prevented from getting work because the Department of Public Health (DPH) decided that she was “unsuitable” for the job due to her criminal record. Jessi did, in fact, have convictions from another state that occurred when she was a teenager. After five years of incarceration, Jessi completed probation, obtained her GED, completed substance use treatment, and began actively participating in mental health treatment.

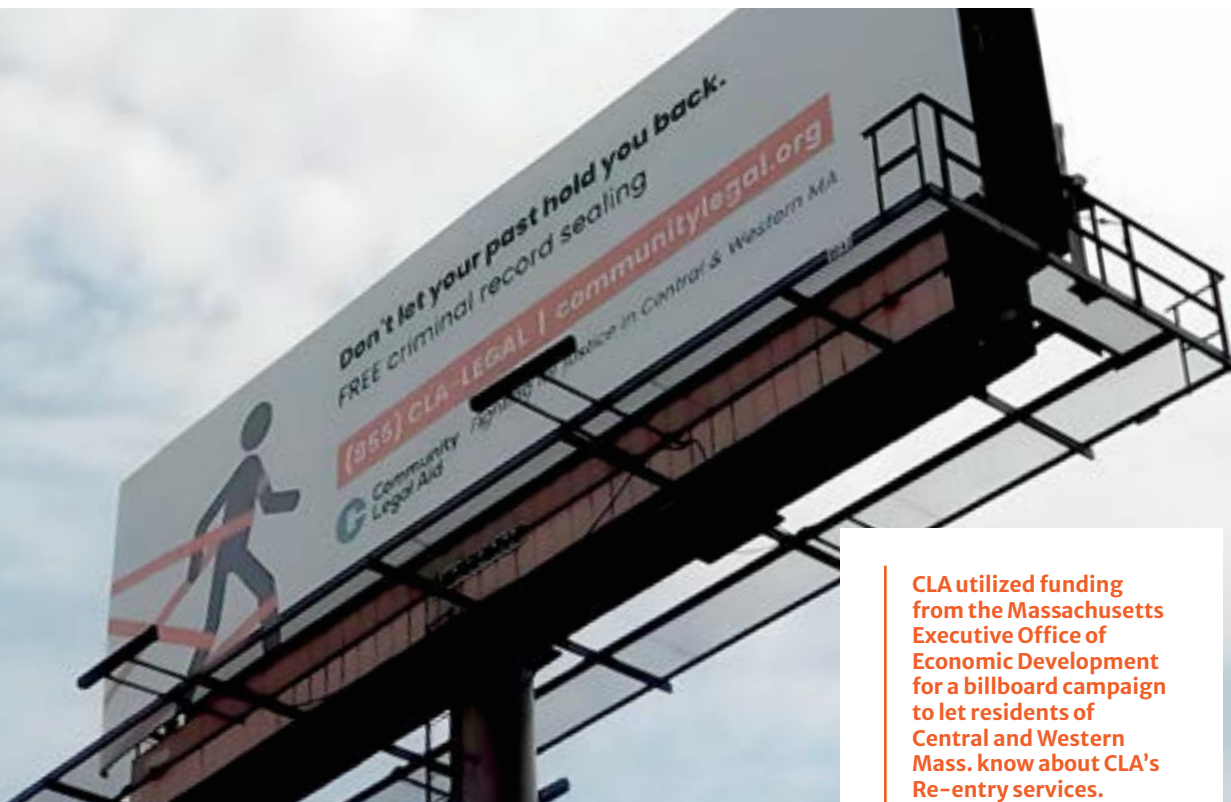
To help Jessi, Attorney Maurer first contacted the relevant courts and obtained the police reports and dockets. Attorney Maurer then helped Jessi appeal DPH’s finding of unsuitability. This advocacy included helping Jessi draft her personal statement, which highlighted the steps she took toward recovery and re-integration. In addition, Attorney Maurer wrote a brief outlining the reasons DPH should reverse its finding.

After receiving Attorney Maurer’s advocacy packet, DPH overturned its finding and Jessi immediately began training as a home health aide. Jessi ultimately became a licensed home health aide and now has a well-paying job which allows her to pay her rent and other expenses and support her young child.



“Criminal records have a devastating impact on individuals and families across the state. Civil legal assistance plays an important role in the fight to ensure access to cornerstone needs, like housing and stable sources of income. The health and well-being of communities depend on the access to resources, stability, and support of each community member.”

—SENIOR SUPERVISING ATTORNEY ALYSSA GOLDEN



CLA utilized funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development for a billboard campaign to let residents of Central and Western Mass. know about CLA’s Re-entry services.

The Central West Justice Center (CWJC), an affiliate of Community Legal Aid, helps individuals seeking humanitarian-based immigration relief, stable housing, and financial security.

On the Front Lines

Legal aid for new arrivals in Central & Western Mass.

Staff in CWJC's Immigration Unit are on the front lines supporting new arrivals with their legal issues. Over the last year, CWJC organized five legal clinics and partnered with other agencies throughout the region on events to help individuals apply for work authorization documents. This work with new arrivals is possible thanks to grants from the **Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)** and the **Massachusetts Attorney General's Office**.

Many new arrivals have come to the U.S. fleeing violence and are seeking work authorization so that they can find employment and afford a place to live and raise their families in safety. Their ability to work also benefits employers who are looking to fill job positions due to labor shortages.

"Migration to our service area is not new. In fact, the need for immigration legal assistance has always outpaced the amount of support CWJC has been able to give. We are continuously looking for new sources of support to expand our capacity to provide quality representation to asylum-seekers and others navigating our complex immigration legal system."

—SENIOR SUPERVISING ATTORNEY ELLEN VANSCHOYOC

Racial Justice Fellow Joins CWJC



In 2023, Attorney **Sara Horatius** joined CWJC as a Racial Justice Fellow under a grant from the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC).

Attorney Horatius will expand CWJC's immigration legal work in the Haitian

community. As a Haitian-American attorney fluent in Haitian Creole, Attorney Horatius will provide critically needed outreach, education, and legal advocacy to members of the Haitian community to help them understand their immigration-related rights and access free legal advocacy in immigration cases.

"Through this Fellowship project, we aim to expand legal representation, address disparities in immigration relief, and increase awareness within the Haitian community about legal rights and legal aid services. We are thrilled that MLAC funded this essential work through the Racial Justice Fellowship."

—ATTORNEY KRISTEN WILLIAMS, CWJC Director

Advocacy for Families

CWJC is also working on the front lines of the housing crisis. Its Benefits Unit has been helping families experiencing homelessness access shelter through the Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter program. CWJC helps families through the cumbersome process of applying for EA, as well as those who have been denied or terminated from the program.

Under the EA program, low-income families with children and pregnant women are entitled to receive shelter if they meet certain eligibility requirements. But starting in November 2023, EA shelter space has been so limited that families are being placed on a waiting list even if they meet all of the eligibility requirements. Delays in accessing shelter mean that children may live in unsafe conditions, experience a disruption of their education, or be at risk of trauma or removal from their families.

"Although the state is a so-called 'right to shelter' state, there are numerous restrictions and barriers that disqualify many families from the program. In fact, shelter is not guaranteed for everyone."

—SENIOR SUPERVISING ATTORNEY MARION HOHN

CWJC's staff also participates in a state-wide coalition of shelter advocates who are proactively working to help improve the system, which has become overburdened in the last year.

With its advocacy in individual cases, along with its efforts with the state-wide coalition, CWJC keeps working to make sure families in crisis have access to shelter.

CLIENT CASE

Anne's Story

"Anne" and her two children, ages 3 and 5, became homeless due to a no-fault eviction after Anne's landlord sold the building she lived in. Because Anne had no place to stay, her children temporarily stayed with her abusive former spouse while Anne lived in her car. When Anne applied for EA shelter for her children and herself one month later, her application was denied because her children were temporarily with her former spouse.

After her shelter application was denied, Anne contacted CWJC. Attorney Camden Fuller appealed the shelter denial and represented Anne during her administrative hearing. In January 2024, the hearing officer ruled in Anne's favor because the children had always been living with Anne before she became homeless. Attorney Fuller then helped Anne reapply for shelter. Finally, six months after becoming homeless, Anne and her children were at last placed in EA shelter.





Advocacy for Farmworkers

CWJC houses the Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Project, a program that provides services to low-income agricultural and migrant laborers across Massachusetts.

CLIENT CASE

Flavio's Story

Flavio fled to the United States after suffering persecution throughout his life due to his identity as a transgender man.

Growing up in Honduras, Flavio liked to play with boys and wear boys' clothing. His mother would insist that he wear dresses, but as soon as Flavio was out of the house, he would change into a t-shirt and shorts. By the time he was 11, he believed that he was a lesbian, as he was attracted to girls. At school, Flavio was beaten up by boys because he liked girls.

As a young adult, Flavio was assaulted by a man who told Flavio that it would teach him to stay away from women. When Flavio went to the police, however, they refused to take his report. Soon after, a friend invited Flavio to a march in support of LGBTQ rights. When the march was breaking up, Flavio was arrested. He was pushed and insulted by the police, who told Flavio that he brought shame to the country and that people like him should not exist. Flavio

was held in a dark cell without food, water, or a bathroom for 24 hours. After he was released, Flavio was followed by police officers. Fearing further persecution, he fled Honduras.

When he reached the U.S. border, Flavio was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). While in detention, Flavio began to understand his identity as a transman.

After several months, Flavio was released from ICE detention. He made his way to Western Mass., where CWJC Attorney Karen Cole helped him with his asylum case in Immigration Court.

At his asylum hearing, Flavio was cross-examined for two hours by an ICE attorney. Although at times Flavio testified through tears, he never faltered in his explanation of his identity and his experiences. After the hearing, the Immigration Court granted his application for asylum.

Today Flavio is an asylee, working hard to support other family members back in Honduras, and continuing to find support from the LGBTQ community in the US.

The attorneys and paralegals in CWJC's Immigration Unit work across our five-county service area. Last year, the unit assisted over 1,400 people including victims of crime, human trafficking, and domestic violence; abused, abandoned, or neglected children; and those seeking asylum because of persecution in their home countries.

CLIENT CASE

Alejandro's Story

"Alejandro" and his young daughter fled Guatemala, where they both suffered constant abuse from his former partner and Alejandro received death threats from his former partner's new boyfriend.

In search of a better and safer life for his daughter and himself, Alejandro sought asylum in the U.S. and eventually settled in Massachusetts. Despite having gone to school in Guatemala and receiving a post-secondary education in nursing, Alejandro ended up working on a farm.

CWJC refiled Alejandro's asylum case, which is now pending in Immigration Court. With CWJC's help, Alejandro was able to acquire a work permit.

Alejandro now advocates for other farmworkers. Says Alejandro, "Farmworkers are an essential workforce... We grow and harvest the very fruits and vegetables that people eat. We should be dignified with a livable wage and overtime pay."



"Part of the advocacy that we do at CWJC is to empower our clients to take ownership of their cases and their lives. While applying for a work permit with a pending asylum application may seem routine, it is a lifeline to workers who have no other way to legitimize themselves in the eyes of employers. After acquiring a work permit, Alejandro felt empowered to assert his rights as well as those of others."

—ATTORNEY CLAUDIA QUINTERO, Staff Attorney, Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Project

*On behalf of our client communities,
CLA Pro Bono thanks the following
attorneys for their volunteer service
in 2023.*

Joel Abu	Christine E. Devine	Chi Suk Kim	Thomas H. Osborn
Akosua Agyepong	Julie Ann Dialessi-Lafley	Kelly Koch	David W. Ostrander
Abra C. Allexenberg	Julie Dick	Eric D. Kornblum	Lynette Paczkowski
Katherine E. Amato	Ashlyn Dowd	Robert W. Kovacs	Stephen Pagnotta
Ryan P. Avery	Gillian Szlachetka	Jonathan Labonte	Mark A. Papirio
Barry Bachrach	Dubay	Nicole Reeves Lavallee	Michael Pastore
Rhonda L. Bachrach	Marjorie Dunlap	Darren Lee	Paul Payer
James E. Baker	David Dupont	Mark Twombly Lee	Steven D. Pohl
Michelle Begley	James Edwards	Catherine Lombardo	Debora J. Queeeney
Peter Benjamin	Charles J. Eusey	Christian W. Lund	Henry Raphaelson
Gerald B. Berg	Michele Feinstein	Beth A. Lux	Justin Raphaelson
Krystle Bernier	Joel H. Feldman	Dawn M. MacKinnon	Michael W. Reining
Pavel Bepalko	Stephanie Fitzgerald	Courtney E. Mayo	Kara Rescia
Daniel Blakesley	Jessica Flaherty	Xai McDonald	Regina Ressin
Erin Bradbury	Christine A. Ford	Nadia R. McGourthy	Maria Rivera-Cotto
Laurel E. Bretta	Terry M. Ford	Cherie McKenna	Caroline Robillard
Christine Brosnihan	Michael A. Frazee	Wendy M. Mead	Louis S. Robin
James T. Brown	Helena Friedman	David Miranda	Valeska Ross
Edward C. Bryant	Robert A. George	Carolyn M. Mitchell	Julie Rougeau
Jeffrey A. Burnstein	Melissa R. Gillis	Jonathan Molleur	Benjamin C. Rudolf
Kathryn Calo	Robert E. Girvan III	Michael Molstad	Janet Ruggieri
Linda T. Cammuso	Jonathan R. Goldsmith	Janet Moore	Barry M. Ryan
Mary Yanneth Bermudez Camp	Lynnette M. Goodnow	Mark Morisi	Hon. David Sacks (Ret.)
M. Trant Campbell	Daniel Goodrich	Jeffrey Morneau	Mary A. Samberg
Nicholas Carbone	Vaishali Goyali	Jane W. Motter	Massiel Sanchez
Maureen Carroll	James F. Gregory	Brian Murphy	Ralph W. Sargent
Chelsea Choi	Elizabeth Halloran	Elizabeth Myska	Carolyn E. Scott-Howe
Lillian Chinenyenwa	Maryjo A. Hart	Carrie Naatz	David G. Sharp
Chukwurah	Brigid M. Hennessey	Jamie Narus	Christopher Sharry
Timothy A. Ciafonna	Jon Heyman	AiVi Nguyen	Alison Silber
David R. Cianflone	Haley Hills	Kate Nicholson	David Simanski
Bernard S. Cohen	Jamie D. Hoag	Edward A. O'Brien	Sean Smith
Lawrence E. Cohen	Maegan Hurley	Philip D. O'Connell	Andrew P. Strehle
Casey Connors	Marie T. Jablonski	Andrea O'Connor	Peter J. Sturgeon
Angelo Corrado	Carla Jackson	James L. O'Connor	Stanley A. Szlachetka
Kathryn S. Couss	Kathleen Jackson	William O'Neil	Brian Tessier
Ann Dargie	Amanda Jordan	Kathleen F. O'Sullivan	Nathaniel A. Tripp
Hyman G. Darling	Yearam Kang	Dan Ordorica	Elena Tsizer
Lauren De Oliveira	Adam Keser	Craig Ornell	Christina M. Turgeon

Paige M. Vaillancourt
Tom G. Vukmirovits
Reid Wakefield
James Walckner
Brian Waller
Gary M. Weiner
James A. Whitbeck
Heather Jill Williams
Susan M. Williams
Thomas N. Wilson

*Medical-Legal
Partnership (MLP)
volunteers are bolded*

558

Cases handled

2,312

Hours donated

\$443,914

Worth of in-kind
donations

Client Thanks

"Attorney [James] Whitbeck was so kind and so skillful at helping me navigate the bankruptcy system. This reduced the intense anxiety I experienced on a daily basis, for years—having someone kind and gentle 'in my corner' provided a significant boost to my morale, my well-being.

I truly thank everyone at Community Legal Aid—for their efficiency in managing my case—the quick turnaround from the Northampton to the Springfield office, and then the referral to Attorney Whitbeck.

I felt such respect from everyone.

I am truly humbled by the gift of this service."

PRO BONO SPOTLIGHT



Attorney Ashlyn Dowd is an Associate at **Mirick O'Connell** in its Labor, Employment and Employee Benefits and Education Law groups.

Attorney Dowd has also assisted many clients through her pro bono service with CLA.

A volunteer since 2021, Attorney Dowd has advocated for multiple clients referred to her by CLA's UMass Memorial Medical-Legal Partnership, a collaboration that addresses the social determinants of health that negatively affect the well-being of patients.

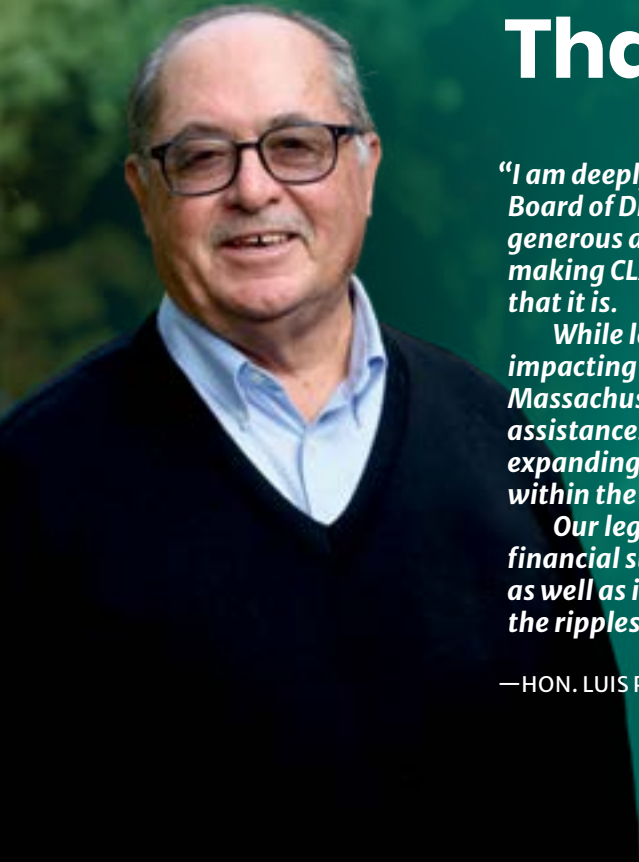
In a recent case, Attorney Dowd effectively addressed the shockingly bad conditions in the home of an elderly UMass Memorial patient, "Katherine." Katherine was a long-time tenant who had significant medical needs due to congestive heart failure.

In the winter of 2022, Katherine notified her landlord that she did not have heat or hot water, had non-working appliances, and was experiencing a mouse infestation in her unit. Her situation only worsened when her bathroom and kitchen flooded, resulting in her bathtub being the only access to water in the entire apartment.

Attorney Dowd advocated for months alongside Katherine and the Board of Health to make sure the landlord did his part to provide a safe and habitable living environment. At the conclusion of the case, Katherine stated that she finally felt that she could breathe easy as Attorney Dowd made sure that all her legal needs were met.

CLA is grateful to Attorney Dowd, whose pro bono service has had a positive effect on the health and well-being of this vulnerable client and others whom she has helped.

Thank You



"I am deeply grateful for everyone—from our dedicated Board of Directors, to our incredible staff, to our generous donors and funders—who contributed to making CLA the robust and highly effective nonprofit that it is.

While last year CLA handled over 8,000 cases, impacting over 20,000 residents of Central and Western Massachusetts, many other people still need our assistance. In the coming year, we hope to continue expanding our legal services as well as our presence within the communities we serve.

Our legal services would not be available without the financial support of state, federal, and private funders as well as individual donors. Your support contributes to the ripples of justice that CLA's work sends forth."

—HON. LUIS PEREZ (RET.), Board President

In the autumn of 2023, CLA celebrated the kickoff of its FY 2024 Access to Justice Campaign with events in Worcester and Franklin Counties.

Worcester County Event Celebrates Access to Justice

At the Worcester County Access to Justice Campaign kickoff event, CLA Board Member Natasha Torres explained how the organization has played a crucial role in her life.

"For over 10 years now I've been not only a Board Member, but a donor and someone who loves to share her story to let others know how vital this nonprofit is in our community."

The festivities at the Worcester County kickoff included live music by Worcester-based folk duo Ash & Eric. In September 2023, Ash & Eric announced their support for CLA by pledging 10% of the revenue they obtained during a three-month period to the organization.

Franklin County Launches Access to Justice Campaign

The Franklin County Access to Justice Committee held its kickoff luncheon in Greenfield, just steps away from where CLA is planning to open a new office in the next year. Speakers included Senator Jo Comerford, who told the crowd,

"Our office is sometimes the doorway for people who are out of time and out of options. Desperate. Exhausted from grappling with all manner of obstacles. And our first call is very often to CLA."

Pictured at the Franklin County Access to Justice Luncheon, left to right, Executive Director Jonathan Mannina; Board Member Dorothy Storrow; Board Member Hon. Beth Crawford (Ret.); Managing Attorney Jennifer Dieringer; Senator Jo Comerford; and Senior Supervising Attorney Alyssa Golden.

"We love our city and we love the folks who are fighting for the rights of the beautiful people who live here. [CLA] has been a heavy hitter in the fight against housing discrimination—an issue that's really important to us ... Thanks for all you do, CLA!"

—FOLK DUO ASH & ERIC, who performed at the Worcester Country Access to Justice kickoff event



Access to Justice Campaign

Every year, Community Legal Aid relies on the help of attorneys throughout Central and Western Massachusetts as they ask their colleagues, law firms, peers, and friends to support our work. Our fiscal year 2023 Access to Justice Campaign, which began on October 1, 2022 and ran through the spring of 2023, raised over \$161,000 from over 600 individuals, law firms, and other businesses.

We could not achieve such results without the help of our committee chairs and committee members. We are incredibly grateful for their work on our behalf. All committee members are recognized in bold in the donor list. Thank you to all our volunteers!



Pictured at the Worcester County Access to Justice Campaign kickoff event, left to right, Managing Attorney Lyonel Jean-Pierre Jr.; Attorney Leonardo Angiulo; Board Member Lynette Paczkowski; Board Member Natasha Torres (front); Board President Hon. Luis Perez (Ret.); Attorney J. Robert Seder, former President of CLA's predecessor organization, Legal Aid Society (1972 to 1975); and Executive Director Jonathan Mannina.

Funders

Thank you to the following foundations, corporations, and community organizations for recognizing the importance of ensuring fairness and justice in the legal system by providing grants to Community Legal Aid. Your generosity and partnership are essential to our vision of justice for all.

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Community Legal Aid is grateful to Country Bank for their generous support of our Language Access Program, which provides translation services to our clients who primarily speak a language other than English. Pictured: Jodie Gerulaitis, Country Bank's Vice President of Community Relations; Jennifer Dieringer, CLA Managing Attorney; and Tom Navin, CLA Development Director.



Cy Pres Awards Allow for Expansion of CLA's Employment Unit

In 2023, CLA received three cy pres awards. Cy pres awards allow unclaimed settlement funds from class action lawsuits to be distributed to organizations that do work which is related to the subject matter of the lawsuit.

The awards, totaling over \$220,000, will be directed toward CLA's Employment Unit. Consisting of five attorneys and two paralegals, the unit represents workers seeking unemployment benefits as well as workers with claims related to wage theft, employment discrimination, and family and medical leave. The awards will allow CLA to expand its team of attorneys and paralegals who provide employment-related legal assistance to low-income workers.

The awards resulted from class action settlements of cases with ties to Hampden County. One award was directed by Phillip J. Gordon of the **Gordon Law Group**. Two awards were directed to CLA by the **Law Office of Nicholas F. Ortiz, P.C.**

“As an attorney leading a firm of litigators and counselors who fight for workers’ and consumers’ rights, I know that it is not uncommon for low-wage workers in various industries to be subject to wage theft and other violations of their legal rights. I am pleased to be able to support the work of Community Legal Aid to vindicate the rights of low-income workers.”

—ATTORNEY NICHOLAS ORTIZ

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Thank you to our fiscal year 2023 donors. The below list recognizes gifts received between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023.

Members of the Access to Justice Campaign Committee are bolded.

() indicates members of our Loyalty to Justice Circle, which celebrates donors who have made five or more gifts in support of our work.*

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"I donate to Community Legal Aid because I support its mission to improve the lives of our disenfranchised neighbors and effect systemic change. The need in the community is profound, and I believe members of the private bar have a responsibility to ensure fair access to justice. When invited to serve on CLA's board, I wholeheartedly said yes. It is a privilege to be part of an organization that leads with innovation and collaboration."

—SEUNGHEE CHA, LLM, Bulkley Richardson, & Gelinás, LLP; CLA Board Member & Committee Member of the Hampshire County Access to Justice Campaign

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“The work that Community Legal Aid does makes a concrete difference in people’s lives. It is so satisfying to be able to contribute to this important work with both my personal philanthropic support and by serving as a committee member of the Worcester County Access to Justice Campaign.”

—PAMELA HEACOCK, Esq.,
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Member of the Worcester
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For a full list of our FY 2023 donors, please visit communitylegal.org/donors.

Members of the Access to Justice Campaign Committee are bolded.

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The 2023 Community Report recognizes donations made between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023. If you think your name should have been included, please contact CLA's Development Department at 413-727-7115 or donorrelations@cla-ma.org.



"I support Community Legal Aid because I believe that access to justice should not depend on how much money you have. I have seen people deprived of food, shelter and fundamental rights because they did not know their rights and did not have an advocate to assert their rights. CLA's advocates provide critical advice and representation to the most vulnerable people in our Western Massachusetts communities. Supporting Community Legal Aid is an investment in justice."

—DOROTHY STORROW, Esq., CLA Board Member & Co-Chair, Franklin County Access to Justice Campaign

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We are grateful when our supporters make a gift to Community Legal Aid as a tribute to their family, friend, or colleague.

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CLA and the wider Massachusetts legal aid community lost a champion in June 2023, when Honorable Edward Ginsburg (Ret.) passed away at the age of 90.

As a Judge in the Probate & Family Court, Judge Ginsburg witnessed firsthand the struggles facing litigants who navigated family law matters unrepresented.

After his retirement from the bench in 2002, Judge Ginsburg founded Senior Partners for Justice, a program that recruits experienced lawyers from all legal backgrounds to serve those who would otherwise go unrepresented in court. In 2005, he joined CLA as a Senior Supervising Attorney in the Family Law Unit.

His devotion to helping the vulnerable did not go unnoticed. He was named one of the 2004 Lawyers of the Year by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly and received the Adams Pro Bono Publico Award from the Supreme Judicial Court Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services in 2005.

Above all he accomplished, he was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, and a valued member of the CLA community. Both his sage legal wisdom and cheery presence in the Worcester office are sorely missed.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Rosalind and Walter Bernheimer | Lifson |
| Barbara Bostley | Liz Mentuck |
| Israela Brill-Cass | Thomas Manning |
| Mary Cassidy | Wendy McGaffey |
| Hon. John Cratsley (Ret.) | Kathleen Lynch Moncata |
| Catherine David | Donna Morelli |
| Patricia and Raymond Dayan | Thomas Navin and Michael O'Neil |
| Hon. David Despotopoulos | Christina Paradiso and Matthew Lindberg |
| Elaine Epstein | Marc Perlin |
| Elizabeth Fahey | Hon. Gail Perlman (Ret.) |
| Phyllis Farfaras | Sarah Richmond |
| Gail and Alan Fields | Maria Rodriguez-Maleck and Paul Maleck |
| Meredith Fuchs | Victoria Rothbaum |
| Penny Gage | Hon. David Sacks (Ret.) |
| Lynne and Bob Gaynor | Mary Anne Sahagian |
| Hon. Jennifer Ginsburg | Harriet Schechter |
| Linda Glaser | Terry Segal |
| Hon. John Greaney (Ret.) | Judith and Leonard Shapiro |
| Karen Greenberg | Alexis Simmons |
| Mary Haskell | Jennifer Stark |
| Sandy and Bill Horne | Gloria Tan |
| David Jellinek | Joshua Wachtel |
| Catherine Kay and Richard Cooper | Nancy Weinstein |
| David Lee | Worcester County Bar Association |
| Michael and Roz Leshin | |
| David Levine | |
| Larry and Marcia | |

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As of Sept. 30, 2023

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Kneeland, Gribouski, & Mooradian

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Dorothy Storrow, Esq.
Storrow Law Offices

Dolores Thibault-Muñoz, Esq.
NewVue Communities

We appreciate our Board Members' outstanding dedication to Community Legal Aid and the clients we serve.

Community Legal Aid Thanks Outgoing Board Members:

- Shari Bai**
- Labrie Dillon**
- David Kroma**
- Jodi K. Miller, Esq.**
- Todd Rodman, Esq.**
- Guinevere Vanhorne**



Executive Director, Jonathan Mannina (L) and Former CLA Board President, Attorney Todd Rodman (R). Special thanks to Attorney Rodman for his many years of dedicated service as a Board Member and as the Board President of Community Legal Aid.

CLA Staff

As of Sept. 30, 2023

Jonathan Mannina
Executive Director

Marina Abraham
Kwame Adzenyah
Carmen Agostini

Noemi Arguinizoni-Jimenez

Camila Arsenault

Brittany Bandani

Peter Beck

Bex Bernocco

Madeline Weaver

Blanchette

Hallie Blashfield

Sarah Bodzinski

Yanira Brito

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Rachel Shannon Brown

Helene Busby

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Jennifer Cunningham-Minnick

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Ines Diaz Rodriguez

Jennifer Dieringer

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Margery Kennard

Isaac Kennen

Inês Kenney

Christine Khamis

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Blair Komar-Bates

Taylor Feliciotti-Largmann

Matthew Lawrence

Omar Laza

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Sofia Lucas

Rory MacAnaney

Tanya Mamootil

Raquel Manzanares

Jaime Margolis

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Annie Maurer

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Leticia Medina-Richman

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Ray Mestre

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Blanca Miller

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Thomas Navin

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Nuri Sherif

Rohit Sinha

Ashley Stone

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Alicia Vaughan

Chelsea Catherine Wait

Dorothy Wilkinson

Jaz Williams

Amanda Winalski

Matthew Wishnoff

Leigh Woodruff

Ashley Zink

AmeriCorps:

Nywel Cheaye

Audrey Kamal

Carly Shaw

Fellow:

Nengi Jennifer Omo-

Egbekuse (MLAC Bart

Gordon Fellow)

Celebrating 25 Years of Service



Director of Client Access Gordon Shaw (pictured) and Executive Director Jonathan Mannina celebrated 25 years of service to legal aid in 2023.

2023 Public Service Awards



Carmen Gonzalez, Pro Bono Coordinator in CLA's Springfield Office, was one of two recipients of the Hampden County Bar Association's annual John M. Greaney Award.



Rachel Shannon Brown, Senior Supervising Attorney for the Elder Law Unit and Disability Benefits Project, received the Massachusetts Bar Association's Community Service Award at the Worcester County Bar Association's Law Day event.



CLA Deputy Director Faye B. Rachlin was honored by Boston College Law School's Public Interest Law Foundation as the first recipient of the new Public Interest Alumni Award.

CWJC Team

As of Sept. 30, 2023

Board of Managers

Michael Badger, Esq.
Badger Legal Group

Jodi K. Miller, Esq.
Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinias, LLP

CWJC Staff

Kristen Williams
Director

Catherine Ady-Bell
Miryam Banuelas

Alexandra Bonazoli

Ann Cascanett

Karen Cole

Jessica David

Caroline Foley

Claudia Folgosa

Camden Fuller

Laitza Chaperon Germain

Johanna Greenberg

Luis Guerrero

Marion Hohn

Marla Jakubiak

Grace Jennetta

Benjamin Levine

Nancy Lopez Ramirez

Kelly Morgan

Jose Gabriel Otero

Laura Putnam

Claudia Quintero

Tania Rodriguez Reyes

Océane Roux

Emsy Nadine Stille

Ellen VanScoyoc

AmeriCorps:

Raina Naylor

Fellows:

Sara Horatius (MLAC Racial Justice Fellow)

Maya McCann (Equal Justice Works Fellow Sponsored by Fidelity Investments and Mintz)



A total of 11 law students joined CLA and CWJC as summer interns in 2023. Interns worked in CLA's Worcester, Fitchburg, Springfield, and Northampton offices, in several different units. Pictured: Summer Interns working in Worcester County.

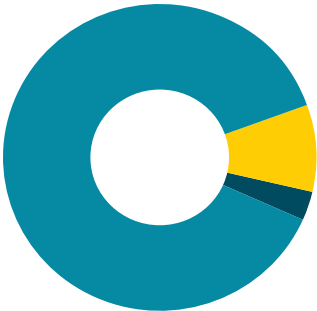
Financials

Community Legal Aid and Affiliate statement of activities for the twelve months ending September 30, 2023

REVENUE

Federal Government Grants	\$5,906,868
State & Local	\$12,837,090
Foundation Grants	\$921,767
Private Fundraising	\$255,872
United Way Grants	\$119,331
Attorneys' Fees	\$44,022
Cy Pres	\$223,882
Other Income	\$563,626
Revenue Before Donated Services	\$20,872,459
Donated Services – Attorneys	\$443,914
Total Revenue After Donated Services	\$21,316,373

ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES



- 88% Program Services
- 9% Management & General
- 3% Fundraising

Coming soon!
 CLA has announced plans for a new main office in Greenfield to expand our services for Franklin County residents.

MAIN OFFICES

- Fitchburg**
 515 Main Street
 Fitchburg, MA 01420
- Northampton**
 20 Hampton Avenue
 Northampton, MA 01060
- Pittsfield**
 152 North Street
 Pittsfield, MA 01201
- Springfield**
 One Monarch Place
 Springfield, MA 01144
- Worcester**
 370 Main Street, Ste. 200
 Worcester, MA 01608

SATELLITE OFFICES

- Greenfield**
 55 Federal Street
 Greenfield, MA 01301
- Holyoke**
 Holyoke Health Center
 230 Maple Street
 Holyoke, MA 01040
- Milford**
 60 North Bow Street
 Milford, MA 01757
- North Adams**
 33 Main Street
 North Adams, MA 01247
- Southbridge**
 79 Elm Street
 Southbridge, MA 01550

Community Legal Aid and its affiliate, Central West Justice Center, are proud to serve the five counties of Western and Central Massachusetts.

BERKSHIRE COUNTY

129%
 increase in cases related to CORI/Re-entry

FRANKLIN COUNTY

50%
 increase in health-related cases

WORCESTER COUNTY

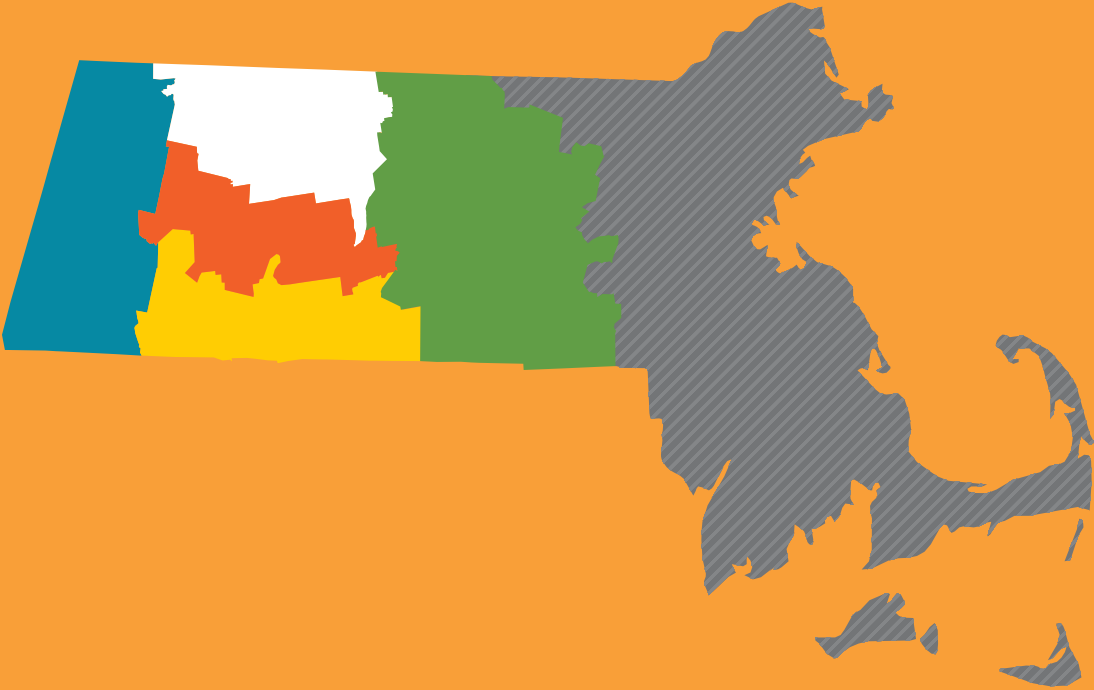
8.4%
 increase in cases related to immigration

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY

13.3%
 increase in cases related to housing

HAMPDEN COUNTY

7.5%
 increase in overall cases





Community Legal Aid
370 Main Street, Suite 200
Worcester, MA 01608

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Help Fight for Justice

Community Legal Aid works to improve the lives of low-income and elderly people through legal assistance that protects fundamental rights, secures access to basic needs, and challenges policies and practices that harm our clients. We work to assure fairness for all in the justice system, protecting homes, livelihoods, health, and families.

MAKE A GIFT TO COMMUNITY LEGAL AID!



Local organizations and individuals like you make Community Legal Aid's work possible. Help CLA continue to thrive by making a tax-deductible gift today. communitylegal.org/donate

JOIN COMMUNITY LEGAL AID'S PRO BONO PROGRAM!



CLA's volunteers greatly enhance our ability to make justice real for our clients. We refer hundreds of cases a year to attorneys with all levels of experience. Learn more or sign up to volunteer at communitylegal.org/pro-bono

TTY/TDD 508-755-3260 | (855) CLA-LEGAL | 855-252-5342 | www.communitylegal.org

With support from

