



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Advancing
Human Rights and
Justice for All

For Immediate Release

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Maryland Legal Aid's *Lawyer in the Library* program receives \$100,000 grant award from Abell Foundation

BALTIMORE, Md., (June 24, 2019) – Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) received a one-year, \$100,000 grant from the Abell Foundation to expand its innovative *Lawyer in the Library* program in Baltimore City. This is the second grant that the Foundation has awarded MLA in support of *Lawyer in the Library*, which places highly skilled MLA attorneys, pro bono attorneys, law students, and volunteers in neighborhood libraries to provide low-income residents on-site legal assistance and criminal record expungements.

The first *Lawyer in the Library* clinic began at the Pennsylvania Avenue branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Pratt Library) near the epicenter of the 2015 civil unrest in Baltimore City. The popularity of the program led to the establishment of regular clinics at the Pratt Library's Waverly and Orleans Street branches. The Abell Foundation's initial grant allowed the program to expand even further to five additional library locations, including the Brooklyn, Cherry Hill, Clifton, Southeast Anchor, and Washington Village branches. The program has now expanded to eight Pratt Library locations around Baltimore City.

The Abell Foundation's initial grant of \$90,000 in 2018 helped MLA provide on-site legal assistance to nearly 1,700 Baltimore City residents at Pratt Library locations in the past year, including 1,138 individuals who received assistance with expunging their criminal records. The Abell Foundation's new grant will provide funding to further expand the program and support staffing resources needed to help even more Baltimore City residents achieve greater stability in their lives and empower them to open doors to new opportunities and second chances.

Due to the popularity of its *Lawyer in the Library* program, MLA has been able to broaden the initiative to other public library systems throughout the state. The program allows staff and volunteers to offer more in-depth and targeted assistance to address many inter-related issues that clients face, including barriers to obtaining affordable housing, employment, subsistence income, and child custody.

"We are most grateful for the Abell Foundation's continued support of this innovative program," said Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., MLA's Executive Director. "Abell's generous award will enable MLA to expand on its provision of life-changing legal assistance for Baltimore City's most vulnerable and marginalized residents."

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About Maryland Legal Aid

Maryland Legal Aid is a private, non-profit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to people who are in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties from 12 offices. The firm handles cases involving a wide range of issues, including family, housing, government benefits, healthcare, education, employment, and consumer law. Maryland Legal Aid also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 14 jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, people with developmental and mental health disabilities, nursing home and assisted living residents, and veterans seeking benefits and assistance with related legal issues also receive representation through special projects. Maryland Legal Aid's Community Lawyering Initiative, which includes its *Lawyer in the Library* program, assists with expunging criminal records to remove barriers to obtaining housing, employment,

and child custody through clinics held in community centers, non-profit organizations, places of worship, schools, and other gathering places.

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