



**MARYLAND**  
**LEGAL AID**

*Advancing*  
**Human Rights and**  
**Justice for All**

## For Immediate Release

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### **Grant from Abell Foundation helps Maryland Legal Aid expand *Lawyer in the Library* Program in Baltimore City**

**BALTIMORE, Md.**, (January 4, 2018) – Maryland Legal Aid received a \$90,000 grant from the Abell Foundation to expand its *Lawyer in the Library* program in Baltimore City.

Initiated in 2015 in response to the civil unrest in Baltimore City, the *Lawyer in the Library* program places Maryland Legal Aid attorneys, paralegals, pro bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers in public libraries to provide free civil legal assistance and criminal record expungements to low-income Marylanders. The first *Lawyer in the Library* program began at the Pennsylvania Avenue branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, near the epicenter of the 2015 conflict. While the program has grown dramatically over the past two years, Maryland Legal Aid still sends a team of advocates every week to the Pennsylvania Avenue library to serve the civil legal needs of the community.

In addition to this initial location, Maryland Legal Aid hosts *Lawyer in the Library* clinics in the Pratt Library's Orleans Street and Waverly branches. In total, the program has assisted more than 2,000 Baltimore City residents since 2015. The Abell Foundation grant will enable Maryland Legal Aid to hire additional staff to run the program at four other Pratt Library branches, thus allowing the program to serve many more Baltimore residents in more neighborhoods.

Due to the popularity of its *Lawyer in the Library* program, Maryland Legal Aid 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 removing barriers to obtaining affordable housing, employment, subsistence income, and child custody.

"We are grateful to the Abell Foundation for their support of Maryland Legal Aid and the *Lawyer in the Library* program," said Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Maryland Legal Aid's Executive Director. "This grant enables us to expand our reach to assist our most vulnerable neighbors in different areas of Baltimore City and to further solidify our partnership with the Enoch Pratt Free Library."

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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 12 Maryland jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, 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.

For more information, visit [www.mdlab.org](http://www.mdlab.org) and follow Maryland Legal Aid on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).