



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Advancing
Human Rights and
Justice for All

For Immediate Release

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***Lawyer in the Library* program expands to Prince George's County**

BALTIMORE, Md., (February 12, 2018) – Maryland Legal Aid's *Lawyer in the Library* program is expanding to the Oxon Hill Branch Library in Prince George's County. Beginning Wednesday, February 21st, Maryland Legal Aid will offer free, one-on-one civil legal advice and criminal record expungements to those who come to the Oxon Hill branch (6200 Oxon Hill Road, Oxon Hill, MD 20745).

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* clinics were held at the Pennsylvania Avenue branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in West Baltimore, near the epicenter of the 2015 conflict. During that time, the branch was managed by Melanie Townsend Diggs, who is now South Area Manager for the Oxon Hill, Surratts-Clinton, Accokeek, and Baden Branches in Prince George's County. Mrs. Townsend Diggs played an integral role in the creation of Maryland Legal Aid's *Lawyer in the Library* program and was instrumental in its growth.

"Bringing *Lawyer in the Library* to the Oxon Hill library is a special opportunity for us," said Gusty Taler, Chief Operating Officer for Maryland Legal Aid. "Not only do we get to work with Melanie again, but we also get to expand our services in Prince George's County. In addition to our longstanding full-service office in Landover, we maintain partnerships with the One-Stop Center in Largo and the Family Justice Center in Upper Marlboro, where we co-locate our legal staff. Being able to offer the *Lawyer in the Library* program in Prince George's County brings our service delivery system to a new level."

South Area Manager Melanie Townsend Diggs shared, "I have first-hand experience with the program and the benefits that it offers. It is truly a life-changing opportunity for those in need of legal services, but who cannot otherwise afford it."

Due to the success of its *Lawyer in the Library* program, Maryland Legal Aid has broadened the Initiative to public library systems throughout the state. Maryland Legal Aid received grants from the Abell foundation (2017) to expand the program in Baltimore City, and from the Maryland Bar Foundation (2016) to purchase mobile technology, including laptops and printers. Through the *Lawyer in the Library* program, staff and volunteers are able to bring more in-depth and targeted assistance to communities to address the many inter-related issues that members of these communities face, including removing barriers to obtaining affordable housing, employment, subsistence income, and child custody.

Maryland Legal Aid will be available at the Oxon Hill Branch Library from 1:00 – 3:00 pm on Wednesdays, February 21, April 25, May 16, June 20, and July 25. Future dates will be announced later this year.

For more information about Maryland Legal Aid's Community Lawyering Initiative, including the *Lawyer in the Library* program, contact Supervising Attorney Meaghan McDermott (443) 451-2805 or visit www.mdlab.org/law-in-lib.

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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 and follow Maryland Legal Aid on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).