



COLLABORATION

INSPIRATION

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



TEAMWORK

DEDICATION

HOPE

COMMITMENT



MARYLAND  
LEGAL AID

Advancing  
Human Rights and  
Justice for All

## MISSION

To provide high-quality legal services to Maryland's poor through a mix of services and to bring about the changes poor people want in the systems that affect 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.

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a private, non-profit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to low-income individuals in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties from 12 offices. The firm provides life-changing legal help to clients by handling cases that involve a wide range of issues, including family, housing, government benefits, healthcare, education, employment, and consumer law. MLA also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 16 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.

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

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



THE UNPRECEDENTED EVENTS OF 2020 laid bare the deeply-rooted inequities that still plague our society. It was a year that exposed the fragility of our economy, and the ugly truths of systemic racism. It was also a year marked by heroism, generosity, sacrifice, and innovation. It was a year of resourcefulness, resilience, reflection, and reevaluation. It was a year of unspeakable sadness as well as great joy. What started as a year like any other quickly became a year like no other.

The onset and rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus in mid-March set the stage for a series of life-altering events. The emergence of the pandemic, which took the lives of millions of people worldwide and close to a half-million in the United States, was particularly devastating for poorer communities and for people of color, who were disproportionately impacted. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies were forced to shut their doors to the public and dramatically cut services, leaving many out of work with few resources to sustain themselves and their families.

In the midst of the COVID-19 chaos, an event so heinous and so disturbing took place that captured the attention of the entire world. The slow, methodical killing of an unarmed and subdued black man, George Floyd, by a white police officer in Minneapolis shocked the conscience of all who witnessed it. As the videotape of Mr. Floyd's killing quickly circulated and replayed on social media and on national and international television, the world witnessed, for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, Mr. Floyd's struggle to breathe, under the weight of the officer's knee pressing on his neck and back until he could breathe no more. People took to the streets to collectively voice their outrage and to demand change and accountability, not just for Mr. Floyd, but for all who came before him and for all who would follow. These demonstrations marked an important milestone in our nation's ongoing fight for human rights and equal access to justice.

Over the past year, with many businesses and government agencies physically closed to the public and struggling to keep pace with the demand for social services and other life-sustaining assistance, MLA's advocates met the challenge of COVID-19 with ingenuity, creativity, and fortitude. MLA mounted a courageous response to the ravages of COVID-19 by seamlessly transitioning daily operations from an office-based model to a work-from-home format. Outreach to communities via social media and other digital and electronic means of communication was increased. Every effort was employed to maximize services while protecting the health and safety of all, including securing special funding to purchase appropriate

personal protective equipment for staff and for clients, and developing and following enhanced health and safety protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

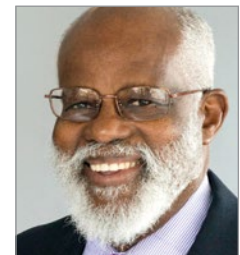
MLA's mission to help poor and marginalized people and communities was central to MLA's decision to re-open its doors in the summer of 2020 to assist clients, particularly those who did not have access to technology or who lacked the skills to use it. Throughout all of these difficult challenges—the pandemic, the economic fallout, and the racial reckoning—MLA's staff and board were motivated and inspired by MLA's deeply embedded and enduring culture of "clients first."

As 2021 begins to leave its mark, it is good to reflect upon the excellent work that has been done over the years to serve the civil legal needs of Maryland's most vulnerable citizens. It has been a challenging, sometimes arduous, but always fulfilling journey. The most enduring takeaway, though, is the memory of the many extraordinary and energetic individuals and institutions that combined their efforts to protect and advance the noble goals of human rights and access to justice for all.

It is an honor and a privilege to lead an organization with wide-ranging support from staff advocates, pro bono attorneys, Board members, members of the Equal Justice Council and Equal Justice Associates, volunteers, foundations and government funders—most notably the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and the federal Legal Services Corporation—and all of the community partners who make it possible for MLA to achieve equal access to justice for thousands of Marylanders each year. Thank you for your consistent and multifaceted support of this work.



Warren S. Oliveri, Jr., Esq.  
Board President



Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.  
Executive Director

# TIMELINE

# 2020



CLIA (Community Law in Action) students and their MLA mentors traveled to important Baltimore City institutions including the Enoch Pratt Free Library and Morgan State University.



Chief Operating Officer Gustava "Gusty" Taler received the Daily Record's Most Influential Marylanders Award.

MLA partnered with Johns Hopkins, Out for Justice, and Jobs Opportunities Task Force for their first expungement clinic.



MLA's Lower Eastern Shore office moved to a new location on Main Street in downtown Salisbury.

Staff Attorney Lindsay Bramble co-hosted a Facebook Live event with TurnAround, Inc., "Coping with Traumatic Stress from the Legal Perspective."

MLA sent letters to clients and donors about its continued operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.



MLA volunteer Steve Joffe was recognized by the Baltimore Ravens for his volunteerism.



MLA welcomed Stuart "Stu" Simms as the new Chief Counsel.



MLA issued a public statement about the murder of George Floyd. Child Advocacy staff held a socially-distanced celebration for a former MLA client who graduated from Morgan State University.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

AUG

JUL

JUN

MLA formed its COVID-19 Re-Opening Committee to examine and determine best practices to safely re-open MLA offices at a limited capacity to staff and clients.





Director of Marketing & Communications Ashley Cheatham received the Daily Record's VIP Award.



Staff Attorney Kim Connaughton returned to hosting in-person, socially-distanced clinics at the Ruth Enlow Library in Garrett County.



Staff from MLA's Lower Eastern Shore office participated at outreaches at Pittsville Elementary and United Way to reach migrant farm workers.

## SEP



Staff from MLA's Lower Eastern Shore office participated at a COVID-19 outreach and food distribution in Salisbury.

MLA followed appropriate health and safety guidelines and re-opened walk-in intake at a limited capacity.

MLA began a partnership with BARCS to provide civil legal assistance to pet owners experiencing civil legal issues.

Eviction advocacy in MLA's Prince George's County office was featured in the Washington Post.

MLA held its annual All Staff & Board Conference virtually.

## OCT

Pro Bono Paralegal Sherrese Campbell (right) and MLA Deputy Chief Counsel Amy Petkovsek participated at a clinic at Word of God Ministries in Baltimore.



MLA received a two-year, \$50K grant from the Hirschhorn Foundation to support its Long-Term Care Assistance Project.

## NOV

Staff Attorney Tim Darby participated at a legal clinic held at Rodwell Elementary/ Baltimore City Middle School and dressed as a crab for the children.

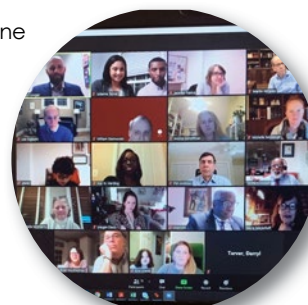


## DEC

MLA hosted its annual "Coats & Clinics" events.



MLA's Equal Justice Council and Equal Justice Associates kicked off their annual campaign virtually during a Zoom wine tasting.



Executive Director Wilhelm Joseph, Deputy Chief Counsel Amy Petkovsek, and Supervising Attorney Ashley Mariner received the Daily Record's Leadership in Law Award.

Chief Attorney Sunny Desai organized a MLA staff campaign to raise close to \$4,000 for the Maryland Food Bank.

MLA produced videos about eviction, divorce and child custody, and created a special COVID-19 Legal Information & Resources web page.

MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative began a partnership with Paul's Place to host weekly clinics.

## MLA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In mid-March 2020, MLA temporarily closed walk-in intake at each of its office locations and many staff began to work from home. Those in need of assistance could continue to access MLA's services through telephone and online intake. In July 2020, in accordance with the State's Re-Opening Plan and that of the Maryland Judiciary, MLA re-opened its doors, on a limited basis, to walk-in clients.

In preparation for the re-opening, MLA formed a committee composed of employees representing different MLA offices, job functions, and areas of operations (e.g., client service delivery, office management, technology, facilities, communications, and human resources). Over a period of two months, the committee engaged in intense research and discussions, and ultimately drafted a detailed set of guidelines and procedures to help managers create plans and schedules to safely re-open MLA units/offices to staff, clients, and visitors on a limited basis.

The Committee's work included consultations with experts from Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH), Maryland's medical health system, and other legal services providers, to learn about current safety standards and protocols and how those measures could be effectively implemented at MLA. Their guidance, and that of others, as well as recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), helped MLA devise its own guidelines to effectively and safely continue in-person operations and service delivery. As an example, in addition to the purchase and distribution of significant quantities of personal protective equipment, a health assessment form, translated into several languages, was developed for anyone entering MLA's offices to complete. MLA also created a special COVID-19 Legal Resources & Information web page, produced a series of YouTube videos about various legal issues resulting from or exacerbated by the pandemic, and sent letters to clients about MLA's office closures with guidance on how to stay in touch with their advocates. Because of the continued spread of COVID-19, MLA had to close its doors to walk-in intake again in November 2020, but was able to re-open in March 2021, in concert with the Maryland Courts' re-opening.





## ADVOCATES FIGHT EVICTIONS AMID THE PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MLA advocates represented and fought to preserve housing for clients while navigating State and Federal moratoriums and other temporary protections put in place for tenants.

The financial fallout of the pandemic will continue to impact individuals and families going forward. The pandemic has only intensified the existing affordable housing shortage, and the increased loss of wages, due to layoffs and closed businesses, has only made matters worse.

As courts re-open and dockets resume, MLA anticipates a flood of eviction cases, many of which will involve unlawful evictions. The following are snapshots of MLA clients who faced eviction during the health crisis.

Staff Attorney Nicole Portnov represents Ms. B. who lost her job due to the pandemic and is now facing eviction. Due to a legal loophole, Ms. B., and many others like her, did not qualify for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) eviction moratorium and were at risk of becoming homeless during the pandemic. CNN covered Ms. B.'s story, which sheds light on how this loophole is a serious concern among many individuals and families throughout the country

and the advocates who represent them. With Attorney Portnov's help, Ms. B.'s Failure to Pay Rent case was stayed until summer 2021.

Staff Attorney Barret Claunch represented two domestic violence survivors, Ms. C. and Ms. J., in a Breach of Lease case. Both clients were separately evicted from a safe house for survivors during the height of the pandemic, when a State of Emergency and moratorium on evictions were in effect.

MLA's legal intervention during the pandemic helped both clients stay in the safe house through December 2020, and will enable them to rent again without a judgment damaging their records.

Staff Attorneys Carl Earhardt and Walker Stump-Coale helped Ms. N. avoid eviction during the pandemic by proving at her Failure-to-Pay-Rent hearing that she was current on her rent.

In 2020,  
MLA helped  
**1,058**  
people avoid  
eviction or  
foreclosure





## **\$784,845:** Total amount in unemployment benefits that MLA recovered for clients in 2020

In 2020, MLA's Administrative Law advocates were presented with an influx of unemployment, nursing home and long-term care cases, many of which resulted from the pandemic. Faced with lockdowns of nursing homes and assisted living facilities, MLA advocates relied on creative and non-traditional methods to reach current and prospective clients to inform them about their civil legal rights, as well as benefits and provisions they were eligible to receive

under the federal government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This included MLA distributing 26,000 flyers to residents in nursing homes, many of which had to be updated each time the federal government revised the CARES Act.

Clients who applied for unemployment benefits were often frustrated by the lack of information about the status of their applications. MLA used innovative negotiation and litigation tactics to receive status updates on clients' applications that had gone unanswered, resulting in clients receiving unemployment benefits to help them sustain their basic human needs.

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### **Unemployment Assistance in Anne Arundel County**

When Governor Hogan issued a State of Emergency order for Maryland, Mr. H. had been working as a bartender at a restaurant in Anne Arundel County. All restaurants were forced to close due to COVID-19, and Mr. H. found himself unemployed. With ongoing health issues and no job, Mr. H. was extremely concerned about his livelihood during the pandemic.

Mr. H. applied for unemployment benefits through the Maryland Department of Labor and received benefits from April to July 2020. However, his benefits stopped abruptly without any explanation or notice from the Department.

Feeling desperate, Mr. H. tried to contact the Department a number of times over many days and months, but never received a response.

With guidance from MLA's Chief Counsel Stuart Simms, MLA's Director of Advocacy for Administrative Law Cornelia Bright Gordon, and Supervising Attorney Danielle Chappell from MLA's Anne Arundel/Howard office advocated for and negotiated on behalf of Mr. H., who was able to receive almost \$6,000 in retroactive unemployment benefits.

Mr. H. shared, **"I really want to share my appreciation for this good and great organization and how you protect those who are troubled and pressed upon. Thank you."**

**In 2020, MLA helped:**

**254**  
people obtain  
a will

**126**  
people obtain  
critical medical  
benefits





## CHILD ADVOCACY CASE SETS MARYLAND PRECEDENT

Staff Attorney Margaret Holmes from MLA's Anne Arundel/Howard office secured a precedent-setting victory in a child advocacy case argued before the Maryland Court of Appeals.

Attorney Holmes represented an infant who showed signs of serious abuse and neglect by the infant's parents. Attorney Holmes and the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services (DSS) fought to place the infant in shelter care for his protection, but the trial court rejected the plea, citing the need for DSS to meet its burden "by a preponderance of the evidence." With only a few hours to prepare for the shelter care hearing, there was no time to subpoena doctors to appear at the hearing. As a result, the infant was returned to his parents.

Attorney Holmes appealed, challenging the trial court's decision, but the Court of Special Appeals affirmed the trial court's decision. Undeterred, Attorney Holmes and DSS filed a petition to request review of the decision by the Maryland Court of Appeals. Attorney Holmes argued that the imposition of the preponderance of the evidence standard at the shelter care hearing departed from the norms of child advocacy practice and "would endanger children's lives in the future." On August 14, 2020, the Maryland Court of Appeals issued its ruling affirming Attorney Holmes's argument that the trial court applied the incorrect standard, and that the trial court can, indeed, take action to protect a child at the initial shelter care hearing if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is in danger of abuse or neglect. **The result is a major victory for child welfare advocates and the human rights of children in Maryland.**

In 2020, MLA  
represented  
**8,254**  
abused and  
neglected  
children



## LEGAL HELP RESOLVES UNSAFE LIVING CONDITIONS

Ms. A. had been experiencing problems with her Cambridge rental home since September 2019. In her daughter's bedroom, rainwater leaked from a hole in the ceiling.

Her landlord responded by telling her to place a tarp on the roof to cover the hole. In addition to the leaky roof, Ms. A. had also reported to her landlord that the home had mold, termites, and a washing machine that constantly leaked water. Months later, her landlord had not fixed the substandard condition of the home. When the ceiling in her daughter's bedroom eventually caved in, Ms. A. turned to MLA's Lower Eastern Shore office in December 2019 for assistance.

Staff Attorney Rachel Harris assisted Ms. A. in filing a Rent Escrow action in District Court. Ms. A.'s hearing, which was originally scheduled for March 2020, was postponed twice due to COVID-19 court closures, and the second time because Ms. A.'s landlord contracted COVID-19 and was unable to appear in court. Ms. A. would not have a hearing until months later in August 2020.

During the four months that Ms. A. waited for her hearing, large termite mounds began to grow on the ceiling in one of the home's bedrooms. While the ceiling was eventually fixed, a tarp was placed over the window with complete exposure to the outside. Due to the pandemic, even housing inspectors had limited access to the premises. Ms. A. had to coordinate with inspectors and repairmen, all while managing a family in the midst of a pandemic and living in an unsafe home. However, Ms. A. continued to set aside the total amount of rent she owed since the courts had closed before she was able to place the money in to escrow. **"At many times, I was very frustrated," shared Ms. A. "But I remained calm and in regular contact with Attorney Harris, who reassured me that I would be okay."**

At the hearing in August, Attorney Harris negotiated a settlement with Ms. A.'s landlord that included rent abatement for seven months for a total of \$5,250, rent paid for August and September at the reduced amount of \$400 per month, and Ms. A. was able to move out of the home by the end of September 2020. Despite the interruptions to the legal process due to the pandemic, MLA was able to resolve Ms. A.'s legal issue so that she could relocate to a new home with her family.





## PRO BONO SUPPORT REUNITES FAMILIES

Pro Bono Attorney Nicholas McDaniels and Staff Attorney Jenny Nance helped Ms. S. when she attended a MLA Lawyer in the Schools clinic to receive help with a child custody issue.

Ms. S.'s ex-husband had custody of their two children under a settlement agreement that she signed after fleeing from his abuse and moving into a domestic violence shelter. Ms. S. felt powerless to bargain with her ex-husband and thought that letting their children continue to live with him in the home that the children had grown up in would maintain a stable life for them.

A few years after their divorce was finalized, Ms. S.'s ex-husband quit his job and told her that he was unable to pay his mortgage. He went to visit family out of state for a few months where he planned for the couple's children to spend the summer with him, which they did. Her ex-husband planned to return to Maryland with their children to find a new place to live before the start of the school year, and Ms. S. was fine with that plan. However, after a few months, her ex-husband still had not returned with their children. Right before the start of the school year, Ms. S.'s ex-husband cut off all communication with her, leaving her without a way to contact her children.

Ms. S. shared, **"I tried to find help at other places, but because I don't speak English very well, people ignored me. But when I came to Lawyer in the Schools,**

**they listened and helped me."**

Attorneys McDaniels and Nance asked the court to expedite Ms. S.'s motion for contempt and modification of custody and visitation, which was scheduled as soon as the courts reopened in September. Ms. S.'s ex-husband did not appear for the hearing, and even contacted Ms. S. the night before the hearing to try to convince her that the hearing had been cancelled.

In September 2020, Attorneys McDaniels and Nance won Ms. S.'s case, and she was awarded sole physical and legal custody of her children and a money judgement for the payments she was due under the couple's divorce settlement. Ms. S.'s children are now living with her again in Maryland.

Pro Bono Attorney McDaniels shared, **"I consider working with MLA in the provision of pro bono services an essential part of my practice and an even more central part of my duty in the practice of law.** Ms. S. had an incredibly high stakes case, which produced such outstanding results due to her devotion to her children and the seamless cooperative effort between myself and MLA Attorney Nance."



In 2020,  
MLA helped  
**146**  
parents secure  
custody of  
their children



## MLA's 2020 All Staff & Board Conference

On November 17, MLA virtually held its 2020 All Staff & Board Conference via Zoom. The theme of the conference was "2020 Vision." Session topics included *Five Years after the Death of Freddie Gray*; *Racial Inequities during the COVID-19 Pandemic*; and *Managing Anxiety and Information Consumption*. There were also some fun and light-hearted games for staff to enjoy.



Court Help Centers in Baltimore City, Cambridge, Catonsville, Glen Burnie, Hagerstown, Salisbury, and Upper Marlboro, and the Maryland Courts Help Centers in Frederick and Annapolis (call center). The District Court Help Centers are walk-in facilities that assist with District Court civil matters, including landlord-tenant, small claims, debt collection and protective orders. In addition, the

### 2020 MCLA Update

The Maryland Center for Legal Assistance (MCLA) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of MLA. Through a contract with the Maryland Judiciary, MCLA operates the District

Maryland Courts Help Centers also assist with a broad range of issues including custody, divorce, and expungement of criminal records via phone, live chat, and the walk-in center in Frederick.

In March 2020, when the Centers closed due to COVID-19 and the provision of walk-in assistance was no longer possible, MCLA successfully transitioned to remote operations, which included expanding its call center and online capabilities to continue serving individuals.

**96,138:**

Number of visitors assisted by the Maryland Courts Help and District Court Help Centers in 2020



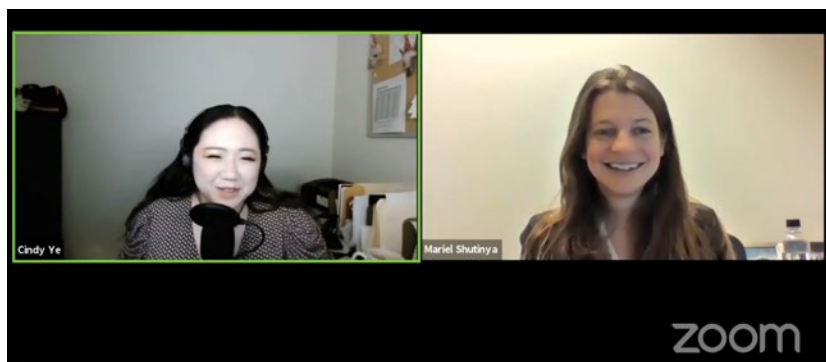
### Community Law in Action

In January and February 2020, MLA Staff Attorneys Carl Ehrhardt and Marja Plater gathered a team of mentors to help CLIA (Community Law in Action) high school students review college essays, observe court proceedings, meet judges, volunteer for local non-profits, visit and tour important Baltimore City institutions, including Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central branch and Morgan State University, conduct mock interviews, set career goals, and much more. After the schools shutdown due to COVID-19, MLA implemented a pen pal system to keep in touch with the students.



## 2020 Coats and Clinics

Amid the pandemic, MLA took significant safety precautions to distribute free and new Macy's coats and legal advice during its annual "Coats & Clinics" events held in December. MLA partnered with Clothes4Souls, Macy's, and local community organizations to distribute 2,300 new coats to adults and children in need at the events, which were hosted in Baltimore City at Mount Pleasant Church and Ministries, and in Prince George's County at Spaulding Library. Financially eligible adults also received free help to resolve their civil legal issues and expunge their criminal records. In addition, MLA hosted a number of smaller Coats and Clinics events with local public schools and community partners.



## MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative

MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative (CLI) brings life-changing legal assistance directly to underserved neighborhoods. The concept for the Initiative began in 2015 when MLA launched a weekly Lawyer in the Library program at the Enoch Pratt Free Library's Pennsylvania Avenue Branch following the civil unrest in Baltimore. Since then, demand for this innovative program has increased significantly and CLI has become an integral part of MLA's service delivery.

Each year, CLI presents a number of weekly and monthly legal and expungement clinics coordinated and hosted in partnership with community organizations from around the state, as well as an expansion of the Lawyer in the Library program to other library locations throughout Maryland. This year, COVID-19 forced MLA's CLI activities online, where the team hosted weekly Legal Lunch & Learns via Facebook and YouTube. Before the pandemic forced a shutdown, CLI held 62 in-person clinics.



MLA staff unpacked, organized and distributed 2,300 new coats to children and adults in need



Staff Attorney Jenny Nance at Furley Elementary School in Baltimore City

## Lawyer in the Schools

MLA's Lawyer in the Schools program connects pro bono attorneys with families of students who attend Baltimore City public schools and who are in need of civil legal assistance and criminal record expungements. MLA staff and pro bono attorneys assist families and community members through in-person and virtual legal clinics, *Know Your Rights* presentations, and school resource fairs and community events. MLA has prioritized partnerships with 10 Baltimore City public schools to ensure attorneys can reach as many communities as possible. MLA also leverages other school resources, such as afterschool programs, Truancy Court, and food pantries, to provide families with coordinated, holistic assistance. In 2020, MLA's Lawyer in the Schools program held 57 legal clinics and conducted outreach at 107 events. (See p. 8 for client story.)



Christopher Conn

## Venable's Loaned Associates Program

Since 2016, Venable LLP and MLA have engaged in a unique partnership through Venable's Loaned Associates Program. Through this program, Venable associates work for six months at a time at MLA. This significant support means that MLA and its clients benefit from the work of experienced lawyers at no cost, as Venable covers their salaries. In turn, the associates have opportunities to enhance their litigation skills, manage their own cases, and take the lead with client interactions.

Christopher Conn joined MLA's Baltimore City Housing/Consumer Unit in December 2020 as a Venable Loaned Associate. He received his law degree from Georgetown University Law School and his Masters of Public Health from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Christopher's previous experience includes working as a legal intern with the Mental Health Division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.

"Working at MLA during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a transformational and humbling experience," Attorney Conn shared. "The pandemic has had an outsized effect on many of MLA's clients, and I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate on their behalf. **I also cannot say enough good things about the team that MLA has assembled. In addition to providing high-quality legal services to their clients, MLA's lawyers and staff have found time to be terrific mentors and instructors.** I am so thankful for their willingness to always discuss the challenging legal issues that impact clients on a daily basis."

## MLA's Pro Bono Program

MLA's Pro Bono Program provides attorneys with opportunities to learn new areas of law through trainings, legal clinics, participation in MLA's task forces on substantive areas of law, and mentorship. In 2020, 204 pro bono attorneys provided legal assistance to clients.

## PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Castell Abner, Jr.	Gina Cuomo	Will Hudson
Richard Adams	Aaron DeGraffenreidt	Glendora C. Hughes
Sarah Adkisson	Stephanie Delang	Darius Iran
Scott Alban	Jason DeMarchi	Kendall T. Jaeger
Mary Albrecht-Jordan	Rina Desai	Christopher Jennison
Christopher Anderson	Connor Desmond	Marilyn Harris
Taslima Apol	Joanna Diamond	Janell Johnson
Patrick Arban	Timothy Dickens	Jennifer Jones
Jo Bahn	Alyssa Domzal	Jordan Jones
Angelica Bailey	John Driscoll	Cheree Jones
Rebecca Baird	Herb Dubin	Ashley Jones
Michael Bakhama	Elizabeth Duncan	Elizabeth Kameen
Timothy Barkley	Louis Ebert	Julian Karpoff
Hasson Barnes	Mark Edelson	Clayton Keir
Mark Bell	Courtney Edmonds	Megan Kemp
Daniel Bird	Karen Elliott	William Kiniry
Deborah Birnbaum	Raenetta Ellison	Laura Klein
Michael Blow	Meaghan Falkanger	Kimberly Knipe
Jacob Bradshaw	Abbie Flanagan	Richard Lebovitz
Kimberly Braslow	Josh Friedman	Jaime Lee
Marc Broady	Alan Garten	Michael Levin
Cheri Brooks	MacKenzie Garvin	Adam Levine
Kevin Burke	Chanekqua Geddis	Ryan Lewis
Melissa Buskirk	Leesha M. Gillis	Kim Lewis
Haesun Burris-Lee	Joseph Githuku	Kenneth Libby
Charles Butler	Maureen Glackin	Richard London
Renee Byrd	Chaitra Gowda	Yong Lu
Sherrese Campbell	Nakita Green	Camille C. Malone
Jennifer Cardin	Sibilla Grenon	Christopher Magnani
Cate Cardinal	Melanie Griffith	Lauren Maher
Pamela Carmody	Sara Gross	Dondrae Maiden
Shannon Carroll	Edward J. Gutman	Kimberly Mann
Lucy Chang	Wendy Hadfield	David Manoogian
Christopher Chaulk	Kay Harding	Stephen Martin
Peter Chin	Michelle Harner	Elizabeth McClellan
Katy Clemens	Christopher Hatfield	Nicholas McDaniels
Monica Coaxum	James Heintz	Audrey McFarlane
James Collins	Stan Hellman	Rob McGarrath
Gary Compton	Kira Hettinger	Michelle M. McGeogh
John Condliffe	Brandyn Hicks	Patricia McLean
Stephen C. Craig, Jr.	Brian Hochheimer	Sayra Meyerhoff
Leonard Croft	Alexandria Hodge	Kristina Miller
Eric Crowder	Lorenzo Holloway	Gregory Mokodean
Zoe Cumberland	Ryan Horka	Alexandria Montanio





## Equal Justice Council

MLA's Equal Justice Council (EJC) actively promotes equal access to justice for Maryland's most economically disadvantaged and vulnerable residents by increasing and diversifying MLA's resources, financial and otherwise, and serving as ambassadors on behalf of MLA. The EJC is composed of managing attorneys from Maryland's top law firms and other prominent members of the Maryland Bar and corporate community.

### Equal Justice Council Leadership

Co-Chairpersons:  
Martin S. Himeles, Jr., Esq.  
Lee H. Ogburn, Esq.



## Equal Justice Associates

MLA's Equal Justice Associates (EJA) is a group of attorneys under the age of 40 that support MLA's mission of providing equal access to civil legal assistance for low-income Marylanders through pro bono service and fundraising. In addition to organizing pro bono service opportunities, fundraising activities, and social networking events, EJA members also receive high-quality training and mentoring from MLA attorneys in a variety of practice areas.

### EJA Leadership

Chair:  
Darryl L. Tarver, Esq.  
Vice Chair:  
Ernie Dominguez, Esq.  
Secretary:  
Aaron DeGraffenreidt, Esq.  
Treasurer:  
Alicia Shelton, Esq.  
Member-At-Large:  
Megan E. Davis, Esq.  
Pro Bono Chair:  
Joanna Diamond, Esq.



### EJA/EJC 2020 Virtual Campaign Kickoff

On December 3, 2020, the EJC and the EJA held a joint Campaign Kickoff event virtually by Zoom. The event included a wine tasting and a presentation from Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera of the Maryland Court of Appeals. The combined efforts of the EJC and EJA throughout the year helped to raise more than \$280,000 in 2020.

Jenna Morris  
Tom Morris  
Joanna Moskwa  
Aron Mozes  
Jordan L. Myers  
John Nasta  
Molly Nicholl  
Jeff Nesson  
Lee Ogburn  
Marilyn Ogburn  
Sean O'Keefe  
Olamide Orebanjo  
Chelsea Ortega  
Stephen Park  
Octavia Parks

Nick Patten  
Alison Peteranecz  
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 Darlene Savoy  
 Briana Scarborough  
 Jennifer Schauffler

Janine Scott  
 Sara Sellers  
 Carol Sellman  
 Rhonda Henderson Serrano  
 Aayushi Shah  
 Lauren Sharrock  
 Nina Shore  
 Mariel Shutinya  
 Amy Siegel  
 Marianne Aumick Sierra  
 Stuart Simms  
 Shareice Simpson  
 Miriam Sincell  
 Alexis Leigh Sisolak  
 Barbara Rose Smith  
 Deborah Lewis Smith  
 Shelly Smith  
 Tina Clements Smith  
 Brett David Smoot  
 Sheila Snowden  
 Mark David Stave  
 William Steinwedel  
 Bobbie Steyer  
 Phillip Stillman  
 Joycelyn Stinson  
 Chasta Stokes-Hagans  
 Walker Stump-Coale  
 Gustava Taler  
 Julianne Tarver  
 Megan Tawes  
 Zachary Tiblin  
 James Toliver  
 Alicia Tracey  
 Andre Tremper  
 Yulia Tsifrina  
 Timothy Turner  
 Marianne Vanderwiele  
 Gerald Vaudreuil  
 Kristopher Vicencio  
 Frank Vitale  
 Frank Voso  
 Katherine Wade  
 Patricia Waldman  
 Kamila Walker  
 Beth Wanger  
 Tammy Levrone Watts  
 Sabrina Wear  
 Shannon Weaver  
 Cassandra Weck  
 Jennifer Weil  
 Haimanot Wentworth  
 Shye Williams  
 Lolita Wilson  
 Morgan Winn  
 Sandra Wooten  
 Winfield Scott Yaw  
 Cindy Ye

Luyao Zhang  
 Emily Zia  
 Christopher Ziemski

## Volunteers

Malia Cygan  
 Wilma Davis  
 Taylor Diehr  
 Herb Dubin  
 Jacob Dziubla  
 William Elliot Geenen  
 Marilyn Harris  
 Debra Huebner  
 Teresa Iannoconi  
 Jessie Joseph  
 Hameed Khan-Tareen  
 Althea Landymore  
 William Leahy  
 John Leary  
 Alyxandrya McClelland  
 Elizabeth Paige  
 Danielle Tingler-Coggins  
 Jeffrey Wetstone  
 Michael Williams  
 Lisa Wise  
 LeJuene Wynn

## Law Clerks & Interns

Mckenza Aldridge  
 Danielle Anderson  
 Stephanie DeLang  
 Anita DiCarlo  
 Briah Gray  
 Mei-Ting Hsing  
 Benjamin Johnson  
 Soumyo Lahiri-Gupta  
 Patience Moore  
 Shaniqua Nelson  
 Danielle Newsham  
 Linyanta Nwosu  
 Grace O'Malley  
 Elizabeth Paige  
 Alexandra Lee Preston  
 Ni'Jah Richardson  
 Rose Richardson  
 Michelle Nicole Sloan  
 Paulina Taniewski  
 Alexis Tolson  
 Misty Viner

*Each list represents  
 calendar year 2020.*

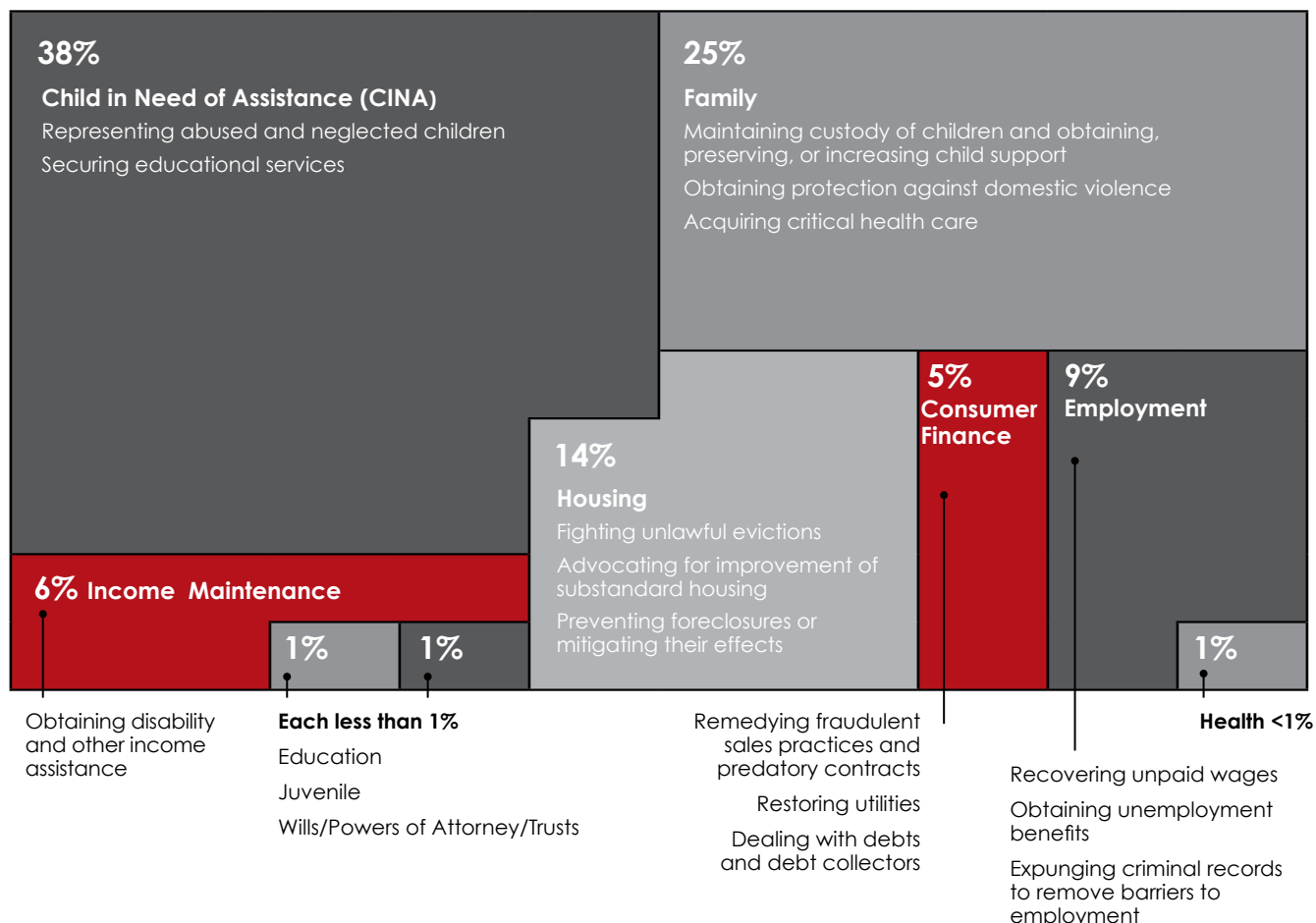




**MARYLAND  
LEGAL AID**

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

## 2020 CLIENT CASE TYPES:



## WAYS YOU CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your tax-deductible donation makes justice a reality for low-income Marylanders.

### Donate Online

Visit [mdlab.org](http://mdlab.org) to make a one-time gift or set up monthly donations.

### Mail a Check

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

### Gifts of Stock

Charles Schwab  
Account Name: Legal Aid Bureau, Inc.  
DTC# 0164  
Account #78352614

### Workplace Giving

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

### Planned Gift/Bequest

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

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

# 2020 Financial Report

	2020	2019
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES & SUPPORT*	\$25,832,123	\$29,856,620
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$28,837,354	\$28,952,987
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$25,369,661	\$25,557,849
Without donor restriction: \$15,212,994; With donor restriction: \$10,156,667		

## SELECTED FUNDING RECEIVED

### Federal:

Legal Services Corporation	\$4,861,673	\$4,595,359
Legal Services Corporation - Pro Bono Innovation Fund	\$107,312	\$53,656
Legal Services Corporation - COVID-19	\$422,690	—
Legal Services Corporation - Telework Capacity Building	\$24,190	—
Baltimore City Community Development Block Grant	\$51,361	\$75,000
Frederick County - Coronavirus Relief	\$23,854	—
Legal Assistance to Victims Grant (OVW)	\$180,868	\$193,851
Montgomery County Community Development Block Grant	\$12,538	\$1,728
Montgomery County - COVID-19 Eviction Prevention Grant	\$18,791	—
Prince George's County - Community Development Block Grant	\$22,961	\$68,510
Prince George's County - Family Justice Center (VAWA)	\$15,975	\$18,000
Prince George's County - Family Justice Center (VOCA)	\$120,000	\$120,000
Ryan White / HIV / AIDS Legal Assistance	\$134,941	\$113,488
Tahirih Justice Center - Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV)	\$7,129	\$23,670
Talbot County Cares Legal Services Program	\$12,017	—
Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA)	\$45,000	\$45,000
Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA)-Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)	\$468,989	\$361,570
Title III-B/Elderly Assistance: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's and St. Mary's Counties; Lower and Upper Eastern Shore	\$262,996	\$336,808

### State:

Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC)	\$11,786,351	\$11,786,180
Other MLSC grants for:		
Extended Representation	\$324,503	\$389,465
Foreclosure Prevention	\$400,050	\$266,700
Stipend for Public Interest Students	—	\$7,454
Workforce Development	\$399,000	\$210,000

Contracted provision of services for self-represented litigants and representation of abused and neglected children, victims of domestic violence, developmentally disabled and mentally ill persons confined to mental health institutions through the Maryland Department of Health, parents in child custody matters, and the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance.

	\$7,124,135	\$8,788,342
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### County Grants-in-Aid:

Anne Arundel	\$27,142	\$36,000
Baltimore City	\$249,605	\$138,647
Baltimore	\$40,833	\$75,833
Harford	\$35,750	\$31,250
Howard	\$143,750	\$110,445

### Circuit Court Pro Se Grants:

Anne Arundel County	\$176,000	\$178,000
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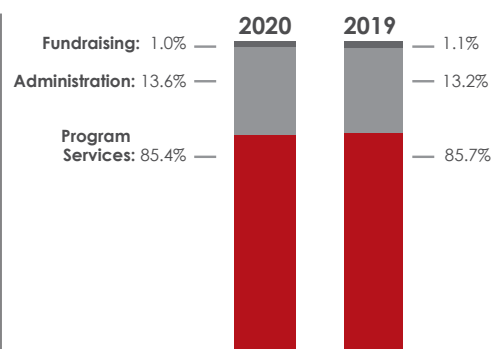
### Private Donations:

Contributions	\$529,501	\$901,039
Foundations	\$304,354	\$307,000

This report contains a summary of 2020 financial information and selected funding sources. Complete audited financial statements are available from MLA upon request.

\*SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan proceeds received: \$4,393,600. PPP loans received and expended during 2020 awaiting forgiveness decisions by the Small Business Administration as of December 31, 2020.

## EXPENDITURE ALLOCATION



## SERVED BY COUNTY 2020

	MLA CASES	MLA PERSONS SERVED	MCLA MATTERS HANDLED*
Allegany	567	1,645	592
Anne Arundel	3,052	6,522	17,220
Baltimore City	7,103	19,542	13,114
Baltimore County	2,009	6,211	3,099
Calvert	276	377	1,245
Caroline	72	247	404
Carroll	119	439	1,314
Cecil	282	1,600	1,534
Charles	393	558	2,951
Dorchester	71	322	363
Frederick	783	2,364	4,663
Garrett	352	1,085	136
Harford	856	3,051	2,305
Howard	321	1,025	3,229
Kent	35	187	155
Montgomery	1,896	6,881	8,751
Prince George's	2,440	6,364	15,618
Queen Anne's	44	224	403
St. Mary's	373	603	1,381
Somerset	79	721	476
Talbot	48	174	421
Washington	257	1,423	1,608
Wicomico	288	1,983	2,646
Worcester	85	521	913
Out of State	75	189	401
Undetermined	—	—	1,124
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,876</b>	<b>64,259</b>	<b>96,138</b>

\* Includes pro se litigants assisted by the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance (MCLA) through the District Court Help Resource Centers in Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Dorchester, Prince George's, Washington, and Wicomico counties, the Maryland Courts Help Centers in Annapolis and Frederick, and the Anne Arundel Family Law Self-Help Center.

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.



Legal Aid Bureau, Inc.  
500 East Lexington Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Designer: Bill Geenen  
Editors: Ashley Cheatham, Alec Chase,  
Graham Cowger, and Asha Sampat  
Printing by Pavsner Press, Inc.

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

### Maryland Legal Aid Office Locations

#### **Allegheny/Garrett**

110 Greene Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
(301) 777-7474  
(866) 389-5243

#### **Anne Arundel/Howard**

229 Hanover Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 972-2700  
(800) 666-8330

3451 Court House Drive  
2nd Floor  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
(410) 480-1057

#### **Baltimore City**

500 E. Lexington Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Telephone Intake:  
(410) 951-7750  
866-635-2948

Business Line:  
(410) 951-7777  
(800) 999-8904

#### **Baltimore County**

215 Washington Avenue  
Suite 305  
Towson, MD 21204  
(410) 427-1800  
(877) 878-5920

#### **Cecil/Harford**

103 S. Hickory Avenue  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
(410) 836-8202  
(800) 444-9529

#### **Lower Eastern Shore**

Dorchester, Somerset,  
Wicomico, Worcester  
201 E. Main Street  
Salisbury, MD 21801  
(410) 546-5511  
(800) 444-4099

#### **Midwestern Maryland**

Carroll, Frederick, Washington  
22 S. Market Street  
Suite 11  
Frederick, MD 21701  
(301) 694-7414  
(800) 679-8813

#### **Montgomery County**

600 Jefferson Plaza  
Suite 430  
Rockville, MD 20852  
(240) 314-0373  
(855) 880-9487

#### **Prince George's County**

8401 Corporate Drive  
Suite 200  
Landover, MD 20785  
(301) 560-2100  
(888) 215-5316

#### **Southern Maryland**

Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's  
15045 Burnt Store Road  
Hughesville, MD 20637  
(301) 932-6661  
(877) 310-1810

#### **Upper Eastern Shore**

Caroline, Kent,  
Queen Anne's, Talbot  
106 Washington Street  
Suite 101  
Easton, MD 21601  
(410) 763-9676  
(800) 477-2543

#### **STATEWIDE PROGRAMS & RESOURCES**

Community Lawyering Initiative  
(443) 451-2805

Farmworker Program  
(800) 444-4099

Foreclosure Legal Assistance Project  
(888) 213-3320

Long-Term Care Assistance Project  
(866) 635-2948

Maryland Senior Legal Helpline  
(866) 635-2948

Veterans' Hotline  
(443) 863-4040

TTY Users: Call Maryland  
Relay, Dial 7-1-1

Cover photos from Unsplash: loading car  
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Sj Objio, store shelves by Isaiah Villar,  
removing mask by Obi Onyeador



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