

LEGAL AID ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

LEGAL AID FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE.
WE FIGHT FOR THEM.



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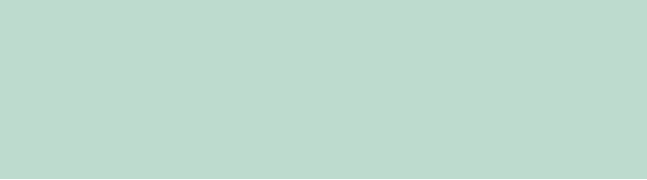
FROM LAAC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As I write this, we will soon be entering our fourth year of the pandemic, and many of you have told me you have several staff out sick—or you are recovering from COVID yourself. I looked back at my past year-end letters and had to laugh at how optimistic I was, year after year, that things would get better and the pandemic would end soon.

The reality, for me and for many in our community, is that we have to be optimistic. If we knew back in March 2020 that our clients would lose jobs, schools would (temporarily) close, that small businesses would close by the hundreds, that child care facilities would close, that federal relief would not be enough, that over a million people in our country would die, we might've pulled the covers over our heads and tried to hibernate until this was all over.

But that's not how we're built. We chose a career in legal aid because we believe that our work—that **we—make a difference**. My grandfather, who traveled the railroads during the Great Depression looking for work, always said, "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst," which was likely something that everyone in his generation believed.



We've weathered our own depressions and recessions in recent years, we've seen people lose everything they've saved for, and we've responded to help our communities.

We are resilient. All of you—every organization in our community—quickly shifted to remote work as a short-term solution. And now, organizations are looking at ways to continue hybrid work with a client-centered focus.

We are adaptable. As you struggle to hire attorneys in our ongoing recruitment and retention challenge, many of you are hiring social workers and other helpers to ensure client needs are met. Or you actively recruited law school graduates to serve as Provisionally Licensed Lawyers (a program extended multiple times and will now continue through 2025 for eligible law graduates).

We are not afraid. Even as our nation seems to be falling apart with hoaxes, insurrection(s), and catastrophic changes in leadership, we roll up our sleeves and get back to work, helping to keep families housed, helping survivors secure safety and stability, helping workers get back-owed wages, and helping people get access to critical state and federal benefits.

Last year, we fought for new funding for homelessness prevention, consumer debt legal services, more Equal Access Fund grants, and a state Loan Repayment Assistance Program for legal aid attorneys. Though the latter two efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, **we secured new, multi-year funding for homelessness prevention (\$30 million) and consumer debt work (\$15 million).** We also worked to create a new funding source for paid law student summer positions.

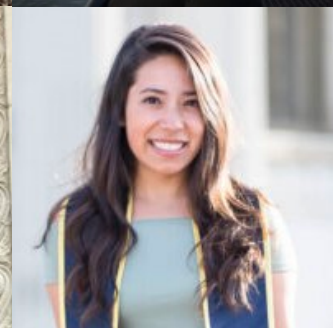
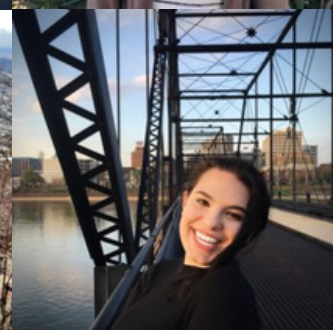
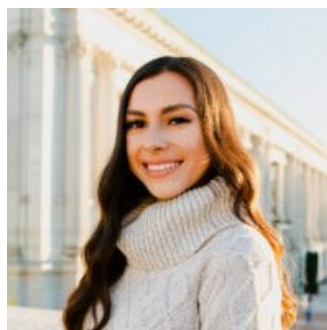
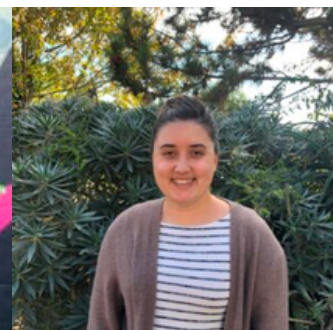
As you work tirelessly to serve your communities, LAAC will continue to support you in any way that we can. Please continue to tell us where you see your budget shortfalls so we can make sure to educate legislators and government agencies about those needs. **We are your “go to” source for advocacy, training, and ensuring that the entire statewide community is working together to share expertise and resources.**

And most importantly, thank you for all you do! **Legal aid in California exists because of your dedication and passion for access to justice.**

In solidarity in the fight for justice,

Salena

Salena Copeland
Executive Director



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

BIGGLESWORTH FAMILY FOUNDATION
VAN LÖBEN SELS/REMBEROCK
WALTER AND ELISE HAAS FUND
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF BANKRUPTCY
FOUNDATION

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA
KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS, LLP
FENWICK AND WEST, LLP
JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
MECHANICS BANK

AND COUNTLESS INDIVIDUALS WHO DONATED TO SUPPORT LAAC'S WORK

THANK YOU CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

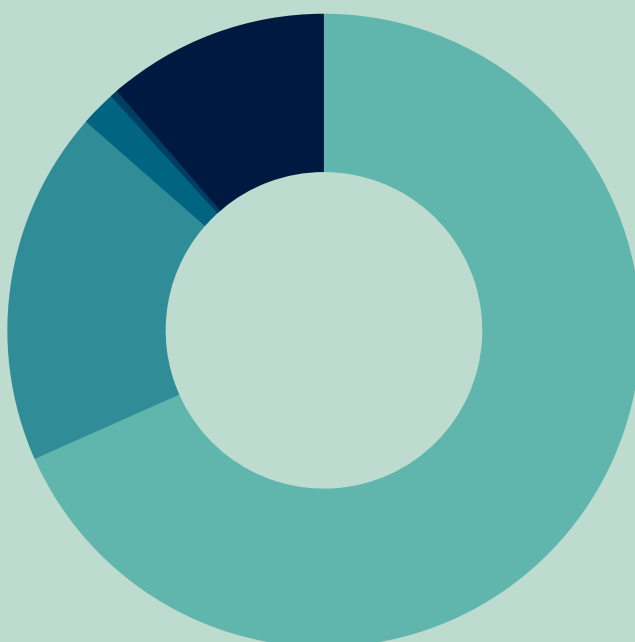
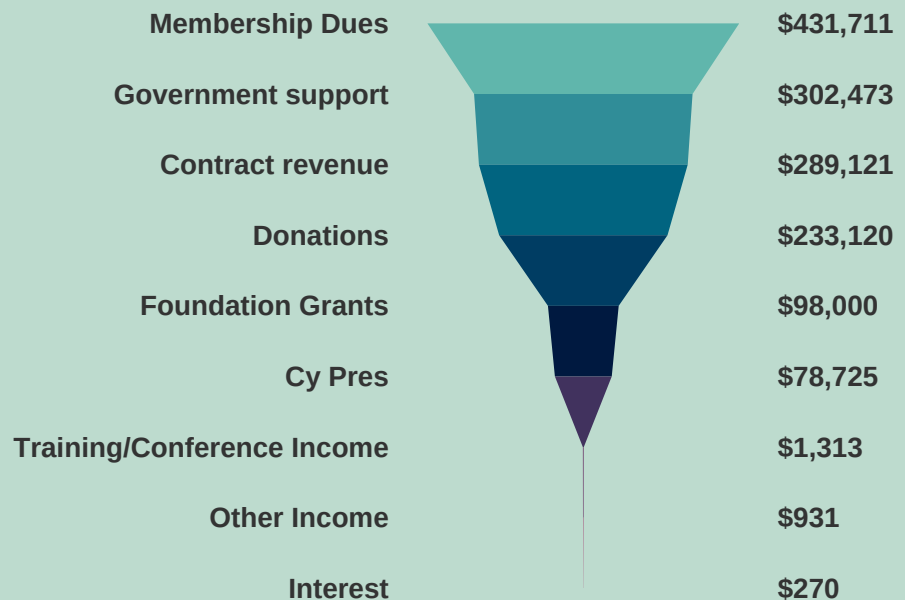
IN 2022, LAAC WAS THRILLED TO CONTINUE OUR DYNAMIC COLLABORATION WITH THE CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION (CALATJ). THE YEAR WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF EXCITING JOINT TRAININGS ORGANIZED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CALATJ AND THE CALIFORNIA LAWYERS ASSOCIATION. THESE EVENTS OFFERED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR ATTORNEYS IN CALIFORNIA TO ENHANCE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ON PRO BONO AND LEGAL AID ISSUES.



FINANCIALS

REVENUE

TOTAL
\$1,448,047



EXPENSES



LAWHELPCA

In 2022, LawHelpCA continued its growth and expansion with a number of exciting initiatives. We doubled our volunteer capacity, from 10 to 25, ensuring that the LawHelp service is available all hours from Monday to Friday. We also began the process of migrating to a new platform, which will make the site more efficient and user-friendly.

Additionally, the LawHelp team has launched a new resource creation program for legal aid organizations, working closely with over 20 organizations to identify their needs. This has already resulted in the creation of four new resources, including event flyers, Know Your Rights (KYR) fact sheets, policy papers, social media graphic templates, and user testing training.

In 2022 we expanded our volunteer capacity by 250% allowing for a record number of chats.

The LiveChat program saw significant success in 2022, with a record number of 5,816 chats conducted by volunteers. This year, we saw an increase in chats related to consumer debt, small claims, and landlord protection, demonstrating the importance of our work and the need for our services.

Overall, LawHelpCA is poised for another successful year, as we continue to provide critical legal resources and support to the communities we serve.

ADVOCACY



In 2022, we worked to further our mission of advocating for more funding and better laws for legal aid, along with more effective policies and procedures at the State Bar of California and Judicial Council, while continuing to adapt, grow, and innovate.

LAAC's Fifth Annual Civil Legal Aid Week in Sacramento was once again a success, bringing together over 50 legal aid attorneys and advocates to meet with over 40 legislators' offices.

LAAC's tireless advocacy with these key funders has been invaluable to all of us, since we could never do it on our own.

-Erin Smith, Family Violence Appellate Project

This year, we co-sponsored AB 2520 (Gabriel), which would have created an Office of Access to Justice, but was, unfortunately, vetoed due to budget concerns. Another bill we co-sponsored, SB 1092 (Hurtado)—which sought to reform the “fair hearing” system—was signed into law. Our other major advocacy priority was opposing the Governor’s CARE Court Plan, SB 1338, which ultimately passed.

Due to our advocacy efforts, the Governor signed a budget containing a significant investment in legal aid, including \$30 million for new funding for homelessness prevention and \$15 million for consumer debt legal services.

ADVOCACY (CONT.)

The legislature also approved funding \$55 million for a state-based Loan Repayment Assistance Program. Although the allocation did not survive into the final budget, our policy arguments were well-received in the Capitol.

We continued our advocacy efforts at the State Bar of California and Judicial Council. Advocacy efforts at the State Bar were primarily focused on updating the rules that regulate the distribution of funds to legal aid organizations through the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission. Important rules included those on definitions and criteria related to indigency, primary purpose, and legal services.

We also expanded our Legal Aid Forms Commenting (LAFC) project,

where we comment on Judicial Council forms with a lens to how those forms impact our client communities.

We expanded and adapted our Research and Evaluation project in several ways. We launched a repository of important research on access to justice and legal aid on our website and continued our quarterly research roundups. We started working on a landscape survey of the legal aid community around research, data collection, and evaluation, which will be completed in 2023.

Finally, we collaborated with OneJustice on a project supporting evidence-based and other data-driven practices in homelessness prevention at legal aid organizations.

TRAININGS

In 2022, LAAC continued its efforts to provide comprehensive and relevant training for legal aid attorneys across California.

This year, we placed particular emphasis on wellness and legal burnout, rights for people with disabilities, and housing protections. We started the year with a panel on Disability Visibility in Legal Aid. The goal of this event was to hold space for legal aid workers with disabilities to share our experiences, information, and personal narratives about being out as disabled in the workplace, and to celebrate our collective brilliance, wisdom, and strength.

In June, we hosted “How Mindfulness Can Help You Avoid Legal Burnout” which delved into specific methods of integrating mindfulness into our member’s day-to-day law practices. Later we picked back up on the current state of California’s COVID-19 Rent Relief Appeals Process and available wrap-around services.

In response to the *Dobbs* decision, LAAC organized a roundtable and discussion on post-*Dobbs* protections for LGBTQ clients. Finally, we were excited to resume our monthly Wellness series for legal aid advocates.

LAAC believes that training legal aid lawyers is critical in providing equitable access to justice for all Californians. Thank you for your support.

FIGURES

\$45
MILLION

IN NEW
FUNDING

102

TOTAL
MEMBERS

25

TRAININGS &
SUMMITS

25

MEMBERSHIP
BENEFITS

At the Legal Aid Association of California, we believe everyone deserves fair access to the justice system, even if you can't afford an attorney. The system, however, is not fair and accessible for everyone, especially for BIPOC, low-income, and vulnerable populations in California. So we work everyday to strengthen the legal aid safety net through advocacy, nonprofit coordination, and training.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR 2022 MEMBERS!

IOLTA MEMBERS

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ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
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