



Access to Justice Campaign



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

ENSURING ACCESS AND FAIRNESS FOR ALL
IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR 25 YEARS

Dear Donors and Friends,

For 25 years, the Access to Justice Campaign has provided resources for civil legal aid in Michigan. We are tremendously grateful for the support from our legal community and thank our donors for your participation in the campaign.

For many Michigan families, having access to an attorney has been a lifeline. When faced with legal issues that affect income, health and safety, most low-income families find themselves at a disadvantage. The consequence of not being able to afford an attorney negatively affects their lives. With your continued support of the Access to Justice Campaign, more civil legal aid attorneys can help families facing devastating uncertainties and provide their clients with legal solutions.

We are encouraged by the ATJ Campaign results and pleased to present to you our 2021 Annual Report. Many of us, because of the areas of law we practice, rarely interact with legal aid attorneys. The work of the Campaign's 15 civil legal aid programs is nothing less than phenomenal and we hope this report helps to highlight the magnitude and impact of the cases they handle.

Together, we can set the precedent for the Campaign's next 25 years. With just over 42,000 licensed Michigan attorneys, participation in the Campaign has more room for growth. This is the time we must collectively make a greater impact in our communities by supporting low-income populations in dire need of access to justice.

Thank you for prioritizing and supporting the Access to Justice Campaign to ensure access to justice and fairness for all.

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“74% of low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year”
Justice Gap Report 2022

Access to Justice Campaign Results

The Access to Justice Campaign seeks support from Michigan's legal community for **15 civil legal aid programs** throughout the state. **100%** of the contributions go directly to these programs and affect how many legal aid attorneys are available to serve Michigan's low-income families by providing free legal services.

Your support in numbers

2018 giving **\$917,633**

2019 giving **\$1,212,498**

2020 giving **\$1,107,537**

2021 giving **\$1,234,089**

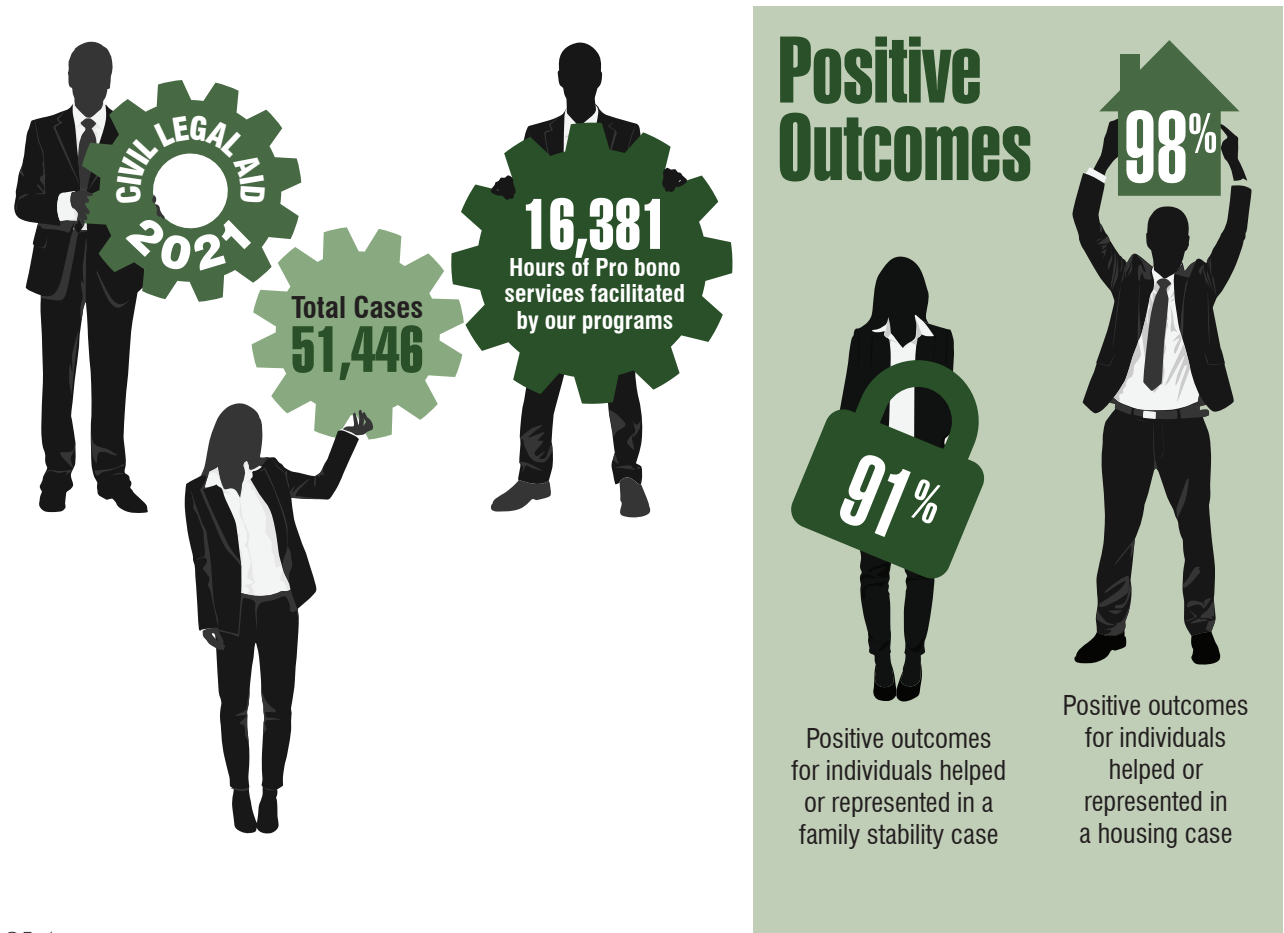


Regional Programs

Marginalized low-income populations currently find themselves at the risk of encountering at least one legal issue, and legal aid programs and attorneys are instrumental to addressing this great need.



Access to an attorney makes a life changing difference when facing the loss of a home, the termination of benefits, the safety of a family, and the protection of rights for vulnerable populations.

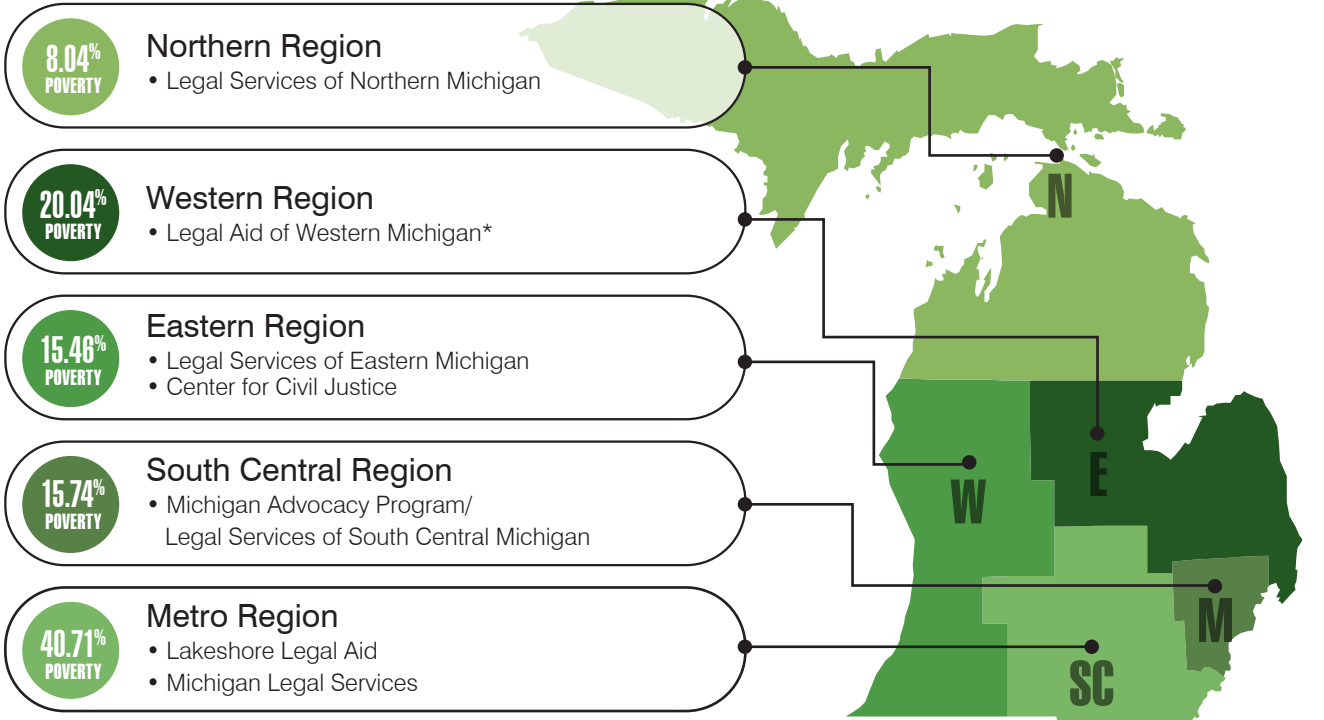


Regional Programs

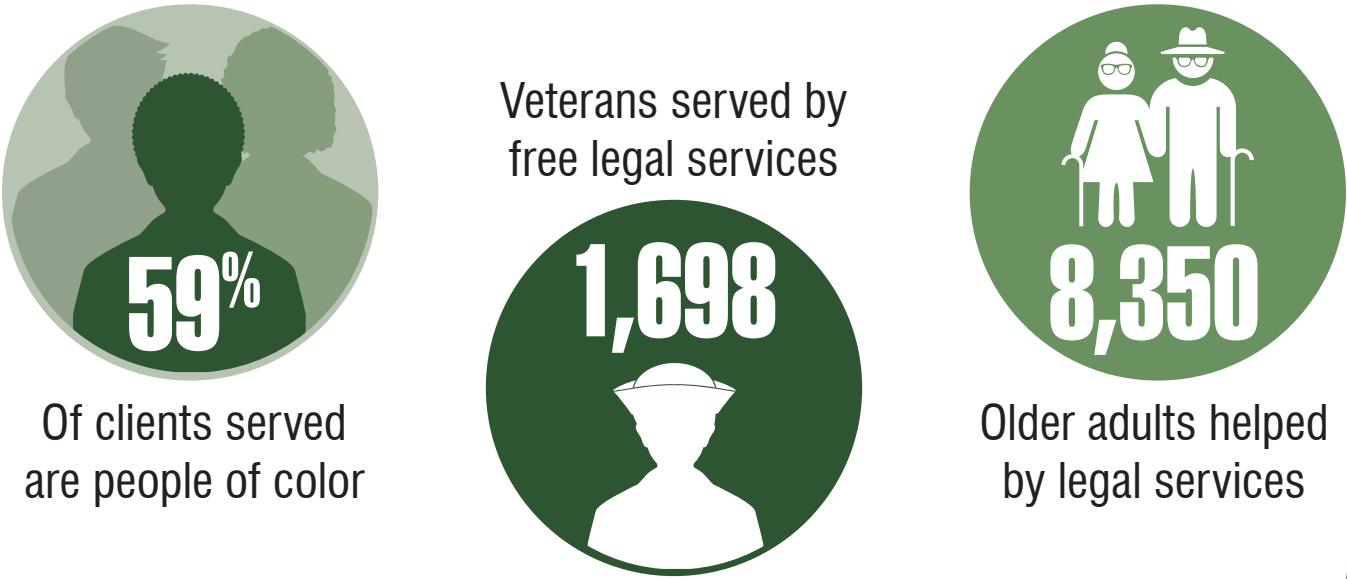
The Access to Justice Campaign supports seven regional civil legal aid programs that provide meaningful access to legal information, advice, and representation to low-income individuals and families.

Legal aid helps working low-income families with children, homeowners and renters, individuals with disabilities, older adults and other vulnerable populations.

Total Number of people in households helped – 112,192 (including 47,140 children)



** Although a participant in the ATJ Campaign, LAWM has decided not to be included in the ATJ Campaign's centralized fundraising effort at this time and will only receive donations designated to LAWM.*



Securing a Land Contract

A woman purchasing her home under a land contract contacted legal aid when the seller took her to court, alleging she had not made all the required payments and threatening to take back the property. She was especially alarmed because many of the payments she made had not been credited to her account and because, by her calculations, she had nearly paid off the land contract. The legal aid attorney reviewed her receipts and the accounting, represented her at the court hearing, and accompanied her to mediation. At mediation, the parties were able to reach an agreement regarding the amount owed to pay off the land contract and a schedule for the payoff. After completion of the agreement, legal aid helped her obtain a deed from the seller and have it recorded.



Ensuring Protection from Violence

A survivor of domestic and sexual violence came to legal aid for help after being denied a Personal Protection Order against her ex-husband based on four incidents of stalking. The client moved to a different county, and after an additional incident of stalking, she filed a request for a new PPO. Her request was again denied due to the court's exclusion of the previous stalking incidents. Legal aid successfully appealed the denial, and she was granted a PPO.



Restoring Independent Living

A 30-year-old man who was rendered quadriplegic at the age of 24, after a biking accident, contacted legal aid for help. He was living independently, but forced to move away from his community and back in with his parents after he was unable to get approval for medical care in his home. Legal Aid helped him demonstrate the necessity of home health care and he was able to move back to his community.

Preventing Discharge from a Nursing Home

Legal aid was contacted to help an older adult facing an involuntary discharge from the nursing home in which she resided. Her physical and cognitive abilities were diminished due to a stroke and the nursing home did not understand how to help her obtain the necessary documents she needed to qualify for health insurance to cover the cost of her care. Legal aid was able to obtain the necessary documentation and secure payment for the client's care. The nursing home agreed to withdraw the involuntary discharge.



2021 Statewide Programs

- **Counsel and Advocacy Law Line (CALL)** is an integrated statewide hotline that provides immediate access to legal advice for low-income individuals and older adults across Michigan, then refers priority cases to full service legal aid organizations. CALL attorneys are the first line of assistance to clients, and through the hotline conduct in-depth, holistic interviews to assess facts, spot issues and evaluate a client's individual needs.



CALL provided advice or referrals for over 21,309 clients.

- **Farmworker Legal Services (FLS)** is a statewide legal services provider that represents indigent immigrant, migrant and seasonal farm workers with a focus on workers' rights, housing, access to public benefits and education, and protection of civil rights. **In 2021, FLS visited 125 migrant labor housing camps** to observe living conditions for the farmworkers and ensure access to legal services and know-your-rights materials. FLS also collaborated with Michigan Legal Help to create online resource materials and worked with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights to broadcast 140 public service announcements related to fair housing for farmworkers.

- **Michigan Community Resources (MCR)** provides a wide range of legal programs to strengthen organizations that serve low-income individuals and communities. In addition to ongoing services in 2021, MCR piloted virtual nonprofit corporate governance compliance clinics for nonprofit organizations serving vulnerable populations in Metro Detroit. Through legal guidance from the clinic, these nonprofits are now stronger organizations that serve hundreds of low-income community members.

MCR helped 78 nonprofits and community-based organizations through educational virtual legal clinics.



- **Michigan Elder Justice Initiative (MEJI)** provides services for Michigan's older adults and people with disabilities. MEJI serves low-income older adults on issues such as healthcare, long term care, public benefits, elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. MEJI's efforts also include advocacy and providing support to other legal aid organizations. **In 2021, MEJI assisted in the safe relocation of 264 long-term care residents.** In addition, MEJI actively trained hundreds of staff and services providers on elder advocacy, resident rights, and elder abuse preventions.

2021 Statewide Programs

- **Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC)** is a legal resource center for immigrant communities. MIRC aims to build a thriving Michigan where immigrant communities experience equity and belonging. In 2021, MIRC launched the first Helpdesk /Family Group Orientation Program at the Immigration Court in Detroit. The program was able to form several partnerships and leveraged virtual community meetings, press releases and social media to reach clients and provide educational information for consumers.



MIRC launched the first Helpdesk /Family Group Orientation Program.

- **Michigan Indian Legal Services.** The mission of Michigan Indian Legal Services (MILS) is to improve the lives of Native American individuals, families and communities through legal assistance and advocacy. MILS services include advocating for the rights of individuals and advancing systems of justice in state and tribal courts for the preservation of Native American families. Their work has produced long term benefits in economic, educational and health care opportunities. **MILS created pro se materials for 11 tribes to inform victims of domestic violence, their advocates and services providers.**

- **Michigan Legal Help Program (MLH)** works with judges, courts, lawyers, bar associations, nonprofits, self-help centers, libraries, and others to provide coordinated and quality assistance for people representing themselves in civil legal matters in Michigan. This year, MLH continued to obtain user feedback to make improvements to the system.

4,252,334 visits to MichiganLegalHelp.org



- **Michigan Poverty Law Program (MPLP)** provides support services statewide for legal aid and poverty advocates on complex, systematic litigation for low-income residents on issues such as evictions, affordable housing, public benefits, family law, foreclosures, and consumer issues. MPLP produces educational materials and coordinates trainings for legal aid attorneys. MPLP also serves as co-counsel when the need arises. In 2021 **MPLP trained 3,359 people through its taskforce and training meetings** and helped 4,197 households save their homes from foreclosure through the Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Program (a collaborative effort with statewide legal aid programs).

Clean Slate For Low-Income Residents

An estimated one million Michigan residents received a glimpse of hope to a better life in April 2021, when the Clean Slate legislation went into effect.

With support from the ATJ Campaign, legal aid programs responded to this emerging need and worked tirelessly to assist many Michigan residents, who sought a new beginning to change the trajectory of their lives.

“Pro bono furthers our ethical responsibility as lawyers and our social responsibility as agents of change.”

– Michelle Johnson Tidjani, Esq., EVP/General Counsel, Henry Ford Health System

Legal aid programs worked collaboratively to train pro bono attorneys and began hosting clinics throughout the state in 2021. They also formed partnerships with numerous human service organizations. As a result, legal aid programs received 2,078.25 donated hours from pro bono attorneys. These attorneys through their diligence in case handling, partnerships with legal aid programs and other partners, are pivotal to ensuring justice for low-income residents.

“Partnering with legal aid programs has allowed me to ensure a positive experience for our clinic participants and volunteer attorneys. I can rely on their committed group of professionals, including their roster of pro bono attorneys to host clinics, train attorneys, screen participants and run ICHATS while I focus on judicial, law enforcement and community partners. Legal Aid has set a high bar for me when considering involvement in similar projects.”

– Nicole A. Evans, District Court Administrator

Legal Representation Matters

For a veteran, expungement meant graduating from nursing school and receiving his license to practice,

A young man with prior misdemeanors and a felony conviction knew a clean slate would give him the opportunity to get housing and qualify for a job. With the help of a legal aid attorney, he was able to obtain an expungement. He is now eligible for housing and able to apply for higher paying jobs.



“Having my conviction expunged is like a brand-new life! I was able to get a job at a good employer that I was unable to get before my expungement. Not only did my pro bono attorney do an excellent job, but we also became friends.”

A young man was able to gain employment a few weeks after his convictions were set aside by a pro bono attorney who worked in house at a large corporation. This “life changing” opportunity allowed him to support his family and improve their living conditions.

In 2021, legal aid programs provided legal advice and representation on 2,550 expungement cases for Michigan clients. They recorded 1,272 closed cases and 1,278 cases pending resolution in 2022. Legal aid programs anticipate a continued rise in requests for assistance for expungement cases and are dedicated to help residents receive a **CLEAN SLATE**.

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We thank our ATJ Committees for their constant support and influence as we pursue *access to justice for all*.

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Your generous support is particularly critical for many families during times of uncertainty.
The tiers reflect the per attorney amount given to the ATJ Campaign by firms in 2021.

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For more information about the Banking on Justice Campaign, please contact iolta@msbf.org

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Consider directing your cy pres funds to the Access to Justice Fund

In 2019, the Michigan Supreme Court amended MCR 3.501 to indicate the Michigan State Bar Foundation as a recipient of unclaimed residual funds, unless the judgment provided specific instructions/provisions. The funds dispersed to the Foundation support access to the civil justice system for low-income residents.

In 2021, the Access to Justice Campaign received \$432,179 in cy pres awards from Bursor & Fisher, P.A., which made a significant impact on the services our funded legal aid programs provide. If your area of practice includes class action cases, please consider supporting civil legal aid by naming the MSBF Access to Justice Campaign as a cy pres recipient.

Future and Goals

The ATJ Campaign's Future Ahead

The Access to Justice Campaign's centralized model for supporting the participating programs has the ability to significantly increase resources for those programs, and thus serve even more of the over 1.7 million people who qualify for free civil legal services. It is within the Michigan legal community's power to make a meaningful impact on how many legal aid attorneys we have in our state to serve those families and help remove the obstacles that stifle their lives.

With your support, clients can attest that having an attorney by their side when faced with legal issues that affect their home, safety and income, is the most powerful tool one can have.

Moving Towards our Goal:

2021 GIVING

\$1,234,089

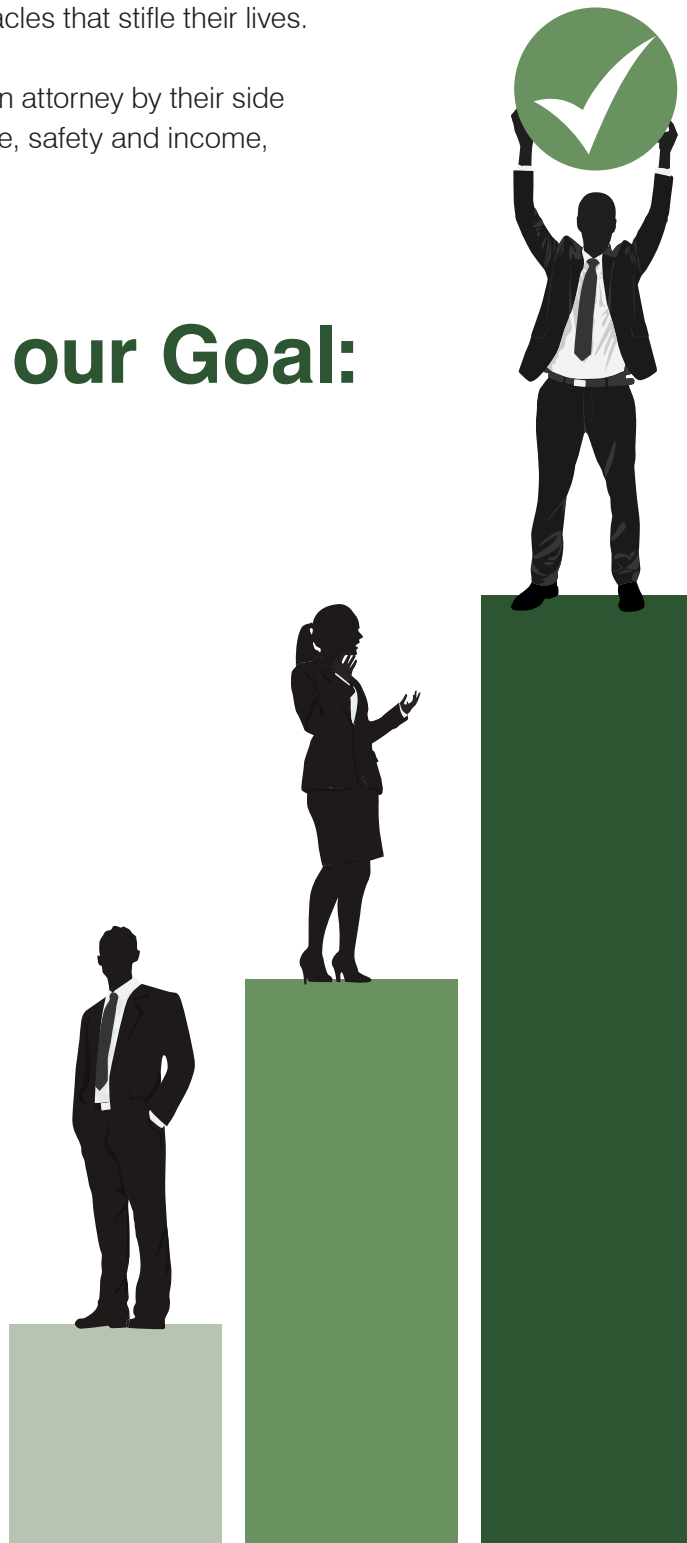
\$29 per attorney giving rate

\$3,188,175

Short term goal based on national average of \$75 per attorney

\$5,356,134

Long term goal based on national average of states with a statewide campaign of \$126 per attorney



Thank you
FOR YOUR SUPPORT



“Without legal aid, I would not have known what to do while going through my custody case. As a single mother I could not afford legal representation for myself, but legal aid guided me through the process every step of the way. My attorney was kind and patient with me and always believed in my fight. Coming from a relationship where domestic violence occurred, I never felt like I had to over explain myself. She remained sensitive to mine and my child’s trauma and supportive of our recovery. Without legal aid I don’t feel the outcome would have gone the way it did, and I am grateful for their help.”



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Access to Justice Fund

Michigan State Bar Foundation

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www.atjfund.org



Michigan State Bar Foundation

ENSURING ACCESS AND FAIRNESS FOR ALL IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR 25 YEARS