

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**“THE WAY TO  
RIGHT WRONGS  
IS TO TURN THE  
LIGHT OF TRUTH  
UPON THEM.”**

**-Ida B. Wells**



Dear Supporters:

It's been said before, but deserves to be said again: 2020 was a uniquely challenging year.

Despite the trials of a global pandemic, Legal Aid grew our programs and services in response to emerging community needs. We increased our staff by 20% and provided life-changing civil legal assistance to those facing immediate threats to shelter, safety, and economic security.

Through it all, our team was guided by the wisdom of this quote, from the legendary Ida B. Wells: "The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them." Through her writing and courageous leadership, she shined the light of truth on the political, economic and social oppression of Black people in America.

Like Ida B. Wells, our Legal Aid team members are truth seekers. The light Legal Aid attorneys, staff, and volunteers generate extends justice to create a better community for us all.

Last year, our entire team exhibited great resilience. We persevered, shining the light of truth upon injustice in our community, righting wrongs.

You – our partners, volunteers, and supporters – help us continue to generate that light. Thanks to your commitment to our mission, we helped more than 14,500 people through cases in 2020, and thousands more through our community outreach and education – including our website, where traffic doubled!

Despite the pandemic and social distancing, Legal Aid grew community partnerships, removed barriers to opportunity, and catalyzed community change.

Together, we are strengthening our region. Together, we are building a brighter and more inclusive future where justice is truly for all.

Thank you for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Colleen M. Cotter, Esq.  
Executive Director  
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland




# IN 2020, LEGAL AID IMPACTED 14,551 PEOPLE

6,037 total cases handled, including 1,048 cases involving volunteers  
(851 cases handled & closed in 2020 + 197 cases continued into 2021)

**LEGAL AID'S SUCCESS LAST YEAR** Increased assets and income and reduced debt for our clients by over **\$6.96 million**

**88%**   
safety **SECURED**

**91%**   
evictions **PREVENTED**

**94%**   
**REMOVED** barriers to education

## CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

 **81.1%** of households served **MAKE LESS THAN \$25,000/year**

 **46%** of all households helped included **CHILDREN**

**21%** of all clients were **OLDER ADULTS (60+)**

 **358** cases involved **U.S. VETERANS or ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY MEMBERS**, impacting **716 PEOPLE**.

 **72%** Female

 **28%** Male

## STAFF & SUPPORTERS

**Our Staff**  
**64** Attorneys / **44** Support Staff

**Our Supporters**  
**1,495** Total Donors  
**1,335** Individuals  
**44** Law Firms / Corporations  
**57** Foundations

## CLIENT RACE / ETHNICITY

**53%** Black

**30%** White

**10%** Hispanic

**1%** Asian


**6%** Identified as other races/ethnicities



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

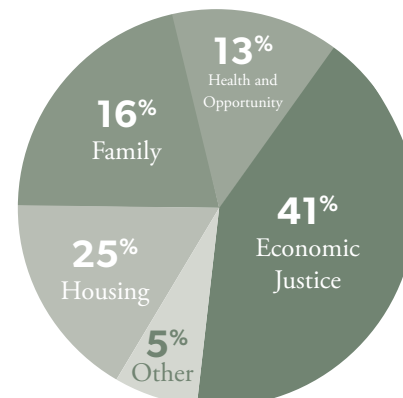
**88** neighborhood clinics 

**14** outreach events (such as resource fairs) 


**45** educational presentations to community groups 

**117** educational presentations for social service providers

## CASES BY PRACTICE GROUP



## CASES BY COUNTY

 **78%**  
Cuyahoga

 **10%**  
Lorain

 **5%**  
Lake

 **5%**  
Ashtabula

 **1%**  
Geauga

 **1%**  
Other



*Legal Aid uses the power of the law to ensure access to basic needs and lift people out of poverty. Thanks to thousands of supporters and community partners, Legal Aid provides services that improve safety and health; promote education and economic stability; secure decent, affordable housing; and ensure the justice system and government entities are accountable and accessible.*

The mission of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is to secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low income and vulnerable by providing high-quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.

## 2020 Finances

<b>REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Legal Services Corporation (LSC)	\$2,886,167	\$2,689,423
Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (now the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation)	\$2,737,870	\$3,664,383
Donations and Private Grants	\$5,498,881	\$4,750,363
Donated Services	\$668,368	\$1,477,948
Other Government Grants	\$996,227	\$698,499
United Ways	\$676,451	\$446,786
Partner Agencies (contracts for legal services)	\$317,267	\$487,338
Other Income	\$1,005,352	\$766,461
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$14,786,583</b>	<b>\$14,981,201</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Program Services	\$10,344,396	\$10,118,533
Support Services (administration & development)	\$1,957,935	\$1,936,181
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$12,302,331</b>	<b>\$12,054,714</b>
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	\$2,484,252	\$2,926,487
Beginning Net Assets	\$11,813,288	\$8,886,801
<b>NET ASSETS as of year end</b>	<b>\$14,297,540</b>	<b>\$11,813,288</b>
<b>BREAKDOWN OF NET ASSETS</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Without donor restrictions		
-Undesignated	\$1,942,775	\$1,502,464
-Net Investment in Property	\$3,130,211	\$3,278,033
-Board Designated Endowment	\$27,273	\$23,459
-Board Designated Reserve Fund	\$6,679,737	\$5,546,366
	\$11,779,996	\$10,350,322
Temporarily Restricted	\$2,073,597	\$1,081,709
Permanently Restricted	\$445,967	\$381,257
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$14,299,560</b>	<b>\$11,813,288</b>

# 2020 Legal Aid Donors

70-year-old Susan was devastated when she was laid off in March of 2020. When her unemployment application was denied, a Legal Aid attorney helped her submit corrected documents and followed up on the issue until she was approved for benefits. "I don't know what I would have done without them," she said of Legal Aid.

We are grateful to members of our fifteen-year giving society ("%"), ten-year giving society ("\*"), five-year giving society ("+").

We welcome our first-time givers ("#").

We honor the memory of deceased donors in italics.

## Individual Gifts:

### \$20,000+

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Tom and Beth Zych \*

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“After she was unjustly fired from her job at a health care facility, Kelsey came to Legal Aid for help getting unemployment benefits. Her Legal Aid attorney and paralegal team guided her through all of the requisite steps, including a formal hearing. When her request was approved Kelsey was so appreciative that she sent her team “thank-you” cards with handmade bracelets.

## ADVOCATES OF JUSTICE

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 Josiah Madar  
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 Edward Mamone and  
 Lisa Roberts-Mamone +  
 Jeffrey and Rosemary Margulies %  
 Antonia Marinucci #  
 Dante Marinucci +



Representation from a Legal Aid attorney helped Marissa and her one-year-old daughter avoid eviction during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I was hesitant to call at first," says Marissa, a Certified Nursing Assistant who helped Cleveland's efforts to "flatten the curve," "but I'm so glad I did."



**Individual Gifts:  
\$250 - \$499.99  
(continued)**

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Scott Matasar and Sheryl Handler  
Lindsay Maxwell Venizelos and  
James Venizelos +  
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Angie's husband drank too much and verbally abused her. He even threatened to shoot her multiple times. To protect herself and her two children, Angie came to Legal Aid for help getting a divorce. A Legal Aid attorney represented Angie and secured for her full custody of her children, child support, and spousal support. Today, Angie is safe, independent, and earning money through her own cleaning business.

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Several weeks after Ohio announced statewide quarantine orders, daycares reopened because they were considered an "essential service." Schools, however, remained closed – so daycare worker Molly, who had school-aged children of her own, had to stay home with her kids. Molly called Legal Aid for help securing unemployment benefits and an attorney helped her apply for relief under the CARES Act. These benefits were a lifeline for the young family during the pandemic.

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Mario was comfortably self-employed through his own landscaping company prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, his clientele and income dwindled, and temp jobs weren't enough for the single father to make ends meet. A Legal Aid attorney negotiated with Mario's landlord while a paralegal

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helped him apply for and secure rental assistance. The eviction was dropped, and father and son could stay in their home. "You are not my lawyer. You are a friend," Mario said to his attorney.

"You just don't know how much I appreciate you."

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Lucy's Legal Aid attorney helped her obtain appropriate therapy services for her grandson Aiden. Aiden has intellectual disabilities, and his doctor wanted him to receive a special therapy Medicaid wouldn't cover. Lucy's attorney prepared a research brief and coached Aiden's doctor to testify on his behalf at a state Medicaid hearing. Thanks to these efforts, the hearing officer ordered that the health plan cover the requested services for Aiden.

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As her due date approached, Michelle did everything she could to make sure her baby would have a safe and healthy life. She applied for public benefits because she had been out of work for a couple of months and COVID-19 was in full swing. When her application was denied, she called Legal Aid for help determining why. An attorney helped her correct an error she'd made on a form and advocated on her behalf with the Department of Job and Family Services (JFS). Thanks to this assistance, Michelle began receiving benefits soon after her baby was born.



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Nina Marley was diagnosed with breast cancer at the end of 2019 and had to leave her job as she underwent medical treatment. Just a few months later, her husband lost his job as COVID-19 hit. When they couldn't afford rent, their landlord filed for eviction.

A Legal Aid attorney helped Nina secure rent assistance to pay all of her back-owed rent and help with future payments. Then she got the eviction dismissed in housing court, so the Marley family could stay safely housed as the pandemic raged on.

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*Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this listing as of December 31, 2020. If you have feedback or want to note a correction, please email [melanie.shakarian@laslev.org](mailto:melanie.shakarian@laslev.org)*

*This year's annual report contains only a few photos:  
an indication of the strange year 2020 was with few in-person events and most meetings held virtually.*