LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of Legal Aid:

2016 has been a memorable year at Legal Aid—a year of expansions, impactful new projects, a memorable anniversary.

In these pages, you will read about the ways in which we have been making justice real for our clients. You will read about our leadership in the city-wide Housing Right to Counsel Project, which is working with many in the law firm community to provide lawyers to low-income D.C. residents threatened with eviction from their subsidized housing. You will read about our new Court-Based Foreclosure Prevention Project, which is keeping so many low-income D.C. residents in their homes. And you will read that we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of another city-wide project, our Medicare Part D Clinics, which have enhanced the quality of life for so many vulnerable, senior and disabled D.C. residents. These are just some of the examples of the project-based and systemic work we conduct on behalf of our clients.

Perhaps more importantly, though, we hope that you will take a few minutes to ‘meet’ some of our individual clients. Clients like 72-year-old Meteryne Dinkins of Ward 4, pictured on this year’s cover, or Latricia Jones of Ward 8, pictured on the facing page. Take a look at the extraordinary photograph of domestic violence survivor Gabrielle Blount (with her son ZiKing) of Ward 5—their lives have been turned around in no small part due to your support of Legal Aid. Legal Aid representation can keep a family from homelessness or provide desperately-needed personal or economic security. By reading these stories and learning about the life-changing impact of our representation, we hope you will better understand Legal Aid and the importance of our work.

We have continued to make great strides in 2016 in terms of making justice a reality for our clients. So far, because of supporters like you, our fundraising has been equally successful. We have received more grant support than ever and had a record-breaking Servant of Justice Awards Dinner and Generous Associates Campaign. But we still need to have a successful year-end Campaign to meet our budget. Even with our growth—we have a larger staff and helped more people in the past year than ever in our history—the need still far outstrips our capacity. Most of our budget comes from private donations. Your donation is critical to our ability to continue MAKING JUSTICE REAL for D.C. residents. Please consider donating today.

Thank you,

Kenneth Klein
President, Board of Trustees
Mayer Brown LLP

Eric S. Angel
Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
HOUSING RIGHT TO COUNSEL PROJECT

Last year, Legal Aid played a leadership role in helping to create a city-wide project with the goal of providing a right to counsel for tenants in subsidized housing cases. The project puts D.C. at the forefront of the national right to counsel movement, stressing the importance of eviction prevention for our neighbors living in subsidized housing. While having a lawyer is important in all eviction cases, it is particularly critical where a subsidy is involved, because of the complex interplay with federal law and because the stakes are so high—losing the case can result in long-term homelessness. The Housing Right to Counsel Project—which has numerous partners, including Bread for the City, the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center, the D.C. Bar Foundation, and many law firms—has the potential to be game-changing for our client community.

Latricia Jones, who was at risk of being evicted from the subsidized apartment where she had lived for more than ten years, is just one of the many clients who has been served through the new Housing Right to Counsel Project. Steptoe & Johnson attorneys John O’Connor and Johanna Dennehy were prepared to vigorously defend Ms. Jones who was being sued for unpaid rent that she had, in fact, paid. But, after discovery, the landlord not only agreed to dismiss the case, but also forgive past debt and make much-needed repairs in Ms. Jones’s apartment. Ms. Jones, who came to Legal Aid under threat of eviction, wound up with an improved home—and a renewed respect for the justice system.

“My lawyers made me feel like I was their only client. They fought for me every step of the way!”

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Our Domestic Violence/Family Law attorneys step in at some of the most important moments in our clients’ lives. We help domestic violence survivors get to safety; help family members obtain stable custody orders; and help provide critical representation in child support matters. For the past several years, we have also focused on increasing access to more holistic legal services in matters beyond filing for protection orders to ensure that domestic violence survivors—particularly those living in D.C.’s poorest wards—have the means to protect themselves and their children from abusive relationships.

“Legal Aid feels like a family. They made all the difference in the world.”
When Gabrielle Blount first came to Legal Aid, she was at her wits’ end. Her baby boy, ZiKing, was just three months old. Ms. Blount was breastfeeding ZiKing, who had health issues from his premature birth that required regular attention. A stable visitation schedule was particularly imperative for ZiKing’s health and security. Unfortunately, ZiKing’s father is a violent man—he had even attacked Ms. Blount physically during her pregnancy—who did not seem able to care for ZiKing. Ms. Blount needed a lawyer. And needed one to move quickly. Fortunately, Legal Aid was ready to help Ms. Blount with a range of family law needs, from emergency protection orders to custody and child support. From that challenging start, ZiKing is now thriving in his mother’s care, while still being able to visit with his father in safe, controlled settings.

“...When the case was over, I could finally breathe again.”
ACCESS TO CRITICAL SAFETY NET BENEFITS

D.C. residents should not need a lawyer to help them obtain the safety net benefits they desperately need and to which they are entitled under the law. Unfortunately, far too frequently, obtaining counsel is an imperative step toward receiving benefits. Every year, our Public Benefits Unit—the largest in the District—plays a critical role in helping D.C. residents obtain necessary lifeline benefits, while also serving as a watchdog when, as is far too often the case, the government fails to provide those benefits fairly and efficiently. In the past year, Legal Aid played a particularly important role in three substantial systemic achievements: leading a coalition of advocates in a successful effort that resulted in the D.C. Council increasing the unemployment insurance weekly benefit; fighting to ensure that the District does not terminate benefits for vulnerable families who face barriers to employment and are doing their best to comply with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families rules; and holding the government accountable for its failure to process Medicaid and Food Stamps applications and renewals in a timely and accurate manner.

Mauricio Rivas, a 52-year-old native Spanish speaker with a severe deformity of his right leg caused by a car accident, came to us after representing himself at a hearing seeking critical Social Security disability benefits. Although his injury had made it impossible for him to continue his past work in the construction and restaurant industries, Mr. Rivas was denied benefits. Significantly, although Mr. Rivas is a monolingual Spanish speaker, the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) had not offered him the services of an interpreter and had not asked him any questions about his ability to read or write in English—issues that were critical to his case and his disability claim. Legal Aid represented Mr. Rivas at the Social Security Appeals Council and successfully argued that the ALJ had erred by failing to inquire into Mr. Rivas’s literacy. The case was remanded for a new hearing and, with Legal Aid’s help, Mr. Rivas was finally approved for benefits. Mr. Rivas can now meet his basic needs and live his life with dignity—because of Legal Aid.
Although we handle most of our public benefits cases in house, law firm attorneys play a critical role in our public benefits practice. 2016 marks the 10-year anniversary of our Medicare Part D initiative, which uses scores of pro bono attorneys to help senior and disabled D.C. residents navigate the prescription drug benefit program, saving them money and ensuring continuity in accessing their prescription medications.

Feradeh Menzie was fired from her position at an assisted living facility after more than 12 years on the job. When Ms. Menzie applied for safety net unemployment benefits, her claim was denied because the Department of Employment Services (DOES) ruled that Ms. Menzie had engaged in “gross misconduct,” disqualifying her from benefits. Among other things, DOES found gross misconduct because during a disciplinary meeting, Ms. Menzie stared out the window, rolled her eyes, and muttered something under her breath. After a contested full-day hearing, at which Ms. Menzie was represented by Ivan Bilaniuk of Dentons, an Administrative Law Judge found in favor of Ms. Menzie on the key facts in dispute and resoundingly reversed the agency decision. The Court noted employers should expect “some discomfort at a disciplinary meeting”—particularly one at which the employee believes she has not done anything wrong. (After she was terminated, Ms. Menzie had received a thank you card signed by more than 20 of the assisted living residents.) After the hearing, the judge awarded Ms. Menzie full benefits—giving her and her daughter a much-needed lifeline as Ms. Menzie looked for another job. As a wonderful postscript, Ms. Menzie played an important role testifying before the D.C. Council in the successful effort to increase the unemployment insurance benefit amount, which had not been increased for more than a decade.

Feradeh Menzie pictured with her daughter Ashley and Pro Bono Attorney Ivan Bilaniuk of Dentons US LLP.

“ My lawyer really put himself out there for us. Just watching him in court was amazing.”

My lawyer really put himself out there for us. Just watching him in court was amazing.”
CONSUMER LAW

Our Consumer Law Unit focuses on foreclosure prevention and protecting individuals from abusive or unfair debt collection practices.

Three program-related expansions from the past year include:

• Establishing a new Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project providing same-day representation to low-income D.C. residents in debt collection matters;
• Becoming one of the pilot host sites for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) financial coaching program, providing a certified financial coach on-site at Legal Aid to help our client community; and
• Expanding our foreclosure prevention work at D.C. Superior Court to try to respond to the extraordinary surge (the number of judicial foreclosures filed grew from 22 in 2012 to 2,450 in 2015) in the need for legal assistance in this area.

Meteryne Dinkins, pictured here and on the cover, is a Legal Aid client and the beneficiary of financial coaching services that were made available to her when she came to our office. Ms. Dinkins, a 72-year-old resident of Ward 4, came to us after having recently retired due to health problems. After receiving financial coaching from our CFPB partner, who worked in collaboration with attorneys in our Consumer and Public Benefits Units, Ms. Dinkins secured a loan modification to preserve ownership of her home and improved her financial circumstances in a multitude of other ways.
HOUSING LAW

This past year saw the release of two groundbreaking publications reminding us of the critical importance of our housing work.

Harvard Sociology Professor Matthew Diamond’s book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* is a gripping account of what it is like to be faced with crushing housing insecurity. “Eviction,” Desmond rightly concludes, “is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty.” This past year also saw the publication of the *Community Listening Project*, a powerful local study which captures the humanity, dignity, and struggles of our client community. From this listening project, housing emerged as the most acute of our clients’ many needs, with more than one in three survey participants stating that they were not living in a safe and secure place, and close to 60% worried about not having any housing at all.

Legal Aid’s Housing Law Unit is by far the largest group of housing lawyers helping tenants in the District. In addition to the Housing Right to Counsel Project highlighted on page 1, on a daily basis, our lawyers work to help families improve their housing conditions and avoid eviction. We also work on systemic issues and cases, helping hundreds, if not thousands, of housing clients at a time.

THE WYLIE FAMILY

“My experience with Legal Aid was the best. I’m very grateful that I had Legal Aid working on my case.”
SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY AND GROUP REPRESENTATION

The majority of Legal Aid’s work is making justice real one case, one client, at a time. But we also endeavor to maximize our impact by incorporating systemic work into every area of our practice. We take a leading role on the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, and push for court, regulatory, and legislative reform that will benefit our client community.

We also work on group or class representation as appropriate. Significant cases from the past year include:

• A resounding appellate victory (with co-counsel from Arnold & Porter) in the Museum Square case, as we work to preserve affordable housing for hundreds of low-income tenants in Chinatown;
• The filing of a class action complaint in federal district court against a D.C. public housing development for systematically and unlawfully overcharging public housing tenants;
• A favorable resolution in a class action brought against a D.C.-based law firm alleging that it engaged in the unlawful practice of filing complaints on behalf of landlords that contained false information with respect to the status of the tenants’ federally-subsidized rental properties, in violation of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

A group of eleven tenants—most of whom are monolingual Amharic speakers—came to Legal Aid when their landlord sued them for eviction. The tenants were confused since the landlord first refused to accept their rent, then sued them for nonpayment. Once we looked into the matter, we found that our clients had been living—most of them for years—with serious and life-threatening Housing Code violations. The building lacked a heating system, had not had smoke detectors for over a decade, and had serious, untreated pest infestations. Ultimately, our clients prevailed in a consolidated bench trial, with the judge finding that the landlord owed each client money for the months during which rent was paid in full but they were living with serious Housing Code violations, and that the landlord needed to make repairs. Thanks to Legal Aid’s representation, these eleven tenants were able to remain, more safely, in their affordable apartments.

“ Our Legal Aid lawyers were helpful, wonderful, and kind.”
BARBARA MCDOWELL APPELLATE
ADVOCACY PROJECT

Our nationally-recognized Appellate Advocacy Project—named in memory of its founding director, esteemed appellate advocate Barbara McDowell—litigates precedent-setting poverty law cases in the D.C. Court of Appeals and elsewhere. This past year, the Project won important legal victories which will benefit hundreds, if not thousands, of local D.C. residents in the areas of eviction, rent control, public housing, housing conditions, child support, workers’ compensation, Social Security disability, and unemployment.

Mathis v. D.C. Housing Authority (D.C.H.A.) was a pathbreaking case from this past year. It had important procedural significance: for years, Legal Aid had argued that D.C.H.A. termination decisions should be directly appealable to the D.C. Court of Appeals. The Mathis case settled this issue once and for all, ensuring that all members of our client community will have access to the appellate courts for these types of cases.

But Mathis v. D.C.H.A. was arguably even more important for D.C. resident Stevon Mathis. As Mr. Mathis memorably put it, he became “extremely homeless” after he lost his housing voucher. The Court of Appeals ruling that he had wrongfully been terminated from the voucher program ended years of homelessness for Mr. Mathis. The ruling not only dramatically reformed the procedures for judicial review of D.C.H.A. decisions, but in a very concrete way, put a roof over Mr. Mathis’s head.

At the time I came to Legal Aid, I was homeless. Thanks to Legal Aid’s patience and perseverence, I won my case, have a roof over my head, and I won’t have to go through homelessness again.”

Stevon Mathis
Legal Aid integrates pro bono into almost every aspect of our program, significantly expanding our impact and providing legal assistance and representation for hundreds of additional clients each year. Volunteer attorneys provide full representation for clients referred from Legal Aid, conduct initial interviews with potential clients in our Northwest and Southeast locations, work in house with our Legal Aid team as law firm Loaned Associates or Volunteer Staff Attorneys, and much more. Overall, last year, pro bono attorneys and other volunteers provided a record-breaking more than 33,500 hours of service—valued at over $17.5 million—to help make justice real for our client community.

LeTesha Dixon, an Iraq war veteran, came to Legal Aid seeking help in resolving custody of her four-year-old son, Izzy. With Dmitry Slavin of Vinson & Elkins by her side, Ms. Dixon was able to get the custody order she needed to alleviate any concerns about her son’s safety. Izzy is thriving in Ms. Dixon’s care.

“My lawyer didn’t make me feel like I was a charity case. That’s important—I’m a veteran, I served my country, I’ve just fallen on hard times.”

LeTesha Dixon, an Iraq war veteran, came to Legal Aid seeking help in resolving custody of her four-year-old son, Izzy. With Dmitry Slavin of Vinson & Elkins by her side, Ms. Dixon was able to get the custody order she needed to alleviate any concerns about her son’s safety. Izzy is thriving in Ms. Dixon’s care.
As Crystal Taylor knows, having a lawyer can make a big difference in leveling the playing field in Landlord-Tenant Court. Ms. Taylor’s landlord sued her for eviction alleging that she had violated certain terms of her lease. But her landlord promptly dismissed the suit after opposing counsel received a copy of the motion for summary judgment filed by Ms. Taylor’s attorneys—Elliot Weingarten, Jonathan Porter, and Adrienne Baxley of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett—arguing, among other things, that the landlord had no evidence to support the allegations in the complaint.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**  
(1/1/2015 to 12/31/2015)

**REVENUE**
- Adjusted Grants and Contributions $4,162,854
- Contributed Services $17,571,628
- Special Events $1,028,205
- Investment Income $18,022
- Total Revenue $22,780,709
- Contributions to Endowments $32,250
- Total Revenue Less Endowment Gifts and Contributed Services $5,176,831

**EXPENSES**
- Program Services $21,621,981
- Management and General $466,525
- Fundraising $594,696
- Total Expenses Less Contributed Services $5,111,574

Please visit www.LegalAidDC.org to see our complete audited financial statement and IRS Form 990.
On April 28, 2016, Legal Aid honored Marion Wright Edelman, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund, and Thomas S. Williamson, Jr., Senior Counsel at Covington & Burling, with our highest honor, the Servant of Justice Award.

Ms. Edelman received her award from the Honorable Patricia M. Wald, who served for 20 years on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, including five years as Chief Judge. Judge Wald noted the connection between Legal Aid and Ms. Edelman’s extraordinary life’s work at the Children’s Defense Fund, ensuring that children have access to food, healthcare, subsidized housing, and protection from physical and emotional abuse. In her inspiring remarks, Ms. Edelman noted that “what we do for each other is what matters most.”

Mr. Williamson’s award was presented by Covington Partner and former Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., who spoke about Mr. Williamson’s long-standing commitment to pro bono work and the legal profession. Mr. Holder described Mr. Williamson as a “quiet warrior for justice,” who had done so much to advance the cause of justice and civil rights locally and nationally. In his poignant remarks, Mr. Williamson noted how special it was to be honored along with his “hero,” Marian Wright Edelman, and to be honored by Legal Aid, which he described as an organization “without peer as the most venerable and accomplished champion at making justice real for the most vulnerable members of our community.” Mr. Williamson challenged the Servant of Justice Dinner attendees both to “dream of the world as we wish it to be and deal with the world as it is.”

The 2016 Klepper Prize for Volunteer Excellence went to Brendan Carroll of Alston & Bird for his extraordinary contributions to Legal Aid’s pro bono program and our client community.

Legal Aid thanks all of its supporters, and especially the Dinner Steering Committee, led by Michael E. Nannes of Blank Rome and Jonice Gray Tucker of BuckleySandler, who co-chaired the awards dinner.
GENEROUS ASSOCIATES CAMPAIGN

Exceeding the extraordinary success of last year, our Campaign Co-Chairs and law firm Coordinators raised a record-breaking $1,475,000 this summer with more than 75 participating law firms. We received more gifts from individuals this year than ever before, with a new record number of non-partner attorneys and staff earning “Outstanding Generous Associates!” recognition for gifts of $250 or more. Special thanks to Neal Katyal of Hogan Lovells for his leadership as Honorary Chair.

The amazing chefs at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison won the post-campaign Cooking Competition, with Arent Fox and Venable coming in second and third, respectively. Thank you to CulinAerie for generously hosting this memorable and enjoyable event.

2016 TOP FIRM COMPETITION RESULTS

301+ Attorneys

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251–300 Attorneys

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201–250 Attorneys

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151–200 Attorneys

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2016 GENEROUS ASSOCIATES CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

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<td>Yeve Chitiga</td>
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<td>Reed Smith LLP</td>
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<td>Keith Howell</td>
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<td>Kelli A. Scheid</td>
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<td>Michelle N. Webster</td>
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The Leadership Cabinet recognizes our most generous organizational donors (9/1/2015 to 8/31/2016).

### PLATINUM PATRON

**$75,000 & ABOVE**

- Covington & Burling LLP*
- D.C. Office of Victim Services
- District of Columbia Bar Foundation
- Jones Day*
- Kirkland & Ellis LLP*
- Latham & Watkins LLP*
- Ujala Foundation
- Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP
- The Steptoe Foundation
- Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox P.L.L.C.
- United Way of the National Capital Area
- Venable LLP
- Wiley Rein LLP
- Zuckerman Spaeder LLP*

### GOLD PATRON

**$50,000 TO $74,999**

- Alston & Bird LLP
- The City Fund
- D.C. Office of the Tenant Advocate
- Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
- Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP*

### SILVER PATRON

**$30,000 TO $49,999**

- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP*
- Arent Fox LLP*
- Arnold & Porter LLP*
- Community of Hope
- Consumer Health Foundation
- D.C. Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking
- Gilbert LLP
- Mayer Brown LLP*
- Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
- The Morrison & Foerster Foundation*
- Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP*
- Sidley Austin LLP*
- Williams & Connolly LLP

### BRONZE PATRON

**$20,000 TO $29,999**

- The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
- Crowell & Moring LLP*
- Dentons US LLP*
- Hogan Lovells US LLP
- Miller & Chevalier Chartered*
- Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP*

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*Represents law firms participating in the D.C. Access to Justice Commission’s Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign. The Campaign’s goal is to substantially increase financial support to the District’s legal services community by establishing benchmarks for law firm giving and annually recognizing and celebrating those firms that have donated at those levels.
The Making Justice Real Giving Circle recognizes our most generous individual donors (9/1/2015 to 8/31/2016).

**PHILANTHROPIST**
$25,000 TO $49,999

David and Martha Dantzic
Jerry Hartman in memory of Barbara McDowell
Thomas Popson and Toby Singer

**BENEFACtor**
$10,000 TO $24,999

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Martin and Arlene Klepper
Alex Young K. Oh
Anthony T. Pierce and Karen Stevens Pierce
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Peter and Anne Thomas

**PARTNER**
$5,000 TO $9,999

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Philip D. Bartz
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Elizabeth Dalmut
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**FRIEND**
$2,500 TO $4,999

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Jacqueline M. Holmes
Stephen E. Kitchen
Thomas Knox
Abigail Lauer

**COLLEAGUE**
$1,000 TO $2,499

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Debo Adegbile
Ann Allen
Thomas Allen
Warren T. Allen, II
Thomas Anderson
Stephen Assy
Eugene Assaf
Allyson Baker
Kristen Baker
J. Douglas Baldridge
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Paul R. Berger and Janice L. Lower
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