

MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



Annual Report
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

MLSC

Every Ending is a New Beginning

After more than seven years with the organization, two as the Executive Director, MLSC staff, board, and partners gathered together on September 19, 2023 to say farewell and good luck to Deb Seltzer. Deb was an instrumental leader in obtaining critical funding for MLSC, particularly funds supporting the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program. She was a dedicated leader and a true believer in MLSC's mission. And she will always be considered a part of our MLSC family.

MLSC welcomed its new Executive Director, Michelle Daugherty Siri, on October 30 after a search performed by the MLSC board of directors. While new to the organization, Michelle is no stranger to the legal services community, having spent nearly 9 years as the executive director of one of MLSC's grantees, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, a nonprofit organization that advocates for the physical safety, economic security and autonomy of women throughout the state through direct legal representation, information and referral services, and legislative advocacy. Prior to joining the Women's Law Center, Michelle worked for the Social Security Administration, the Office of the Attorney General and in private practice. She holds a bachelor's degree from The College of William and Mary and earned her law degree with honors from the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law.

Michelle is looking forward to bringing her skillsets and passion for justice to MLSC, and looks forward to working with the Board and the staff on our collective vision of advancing access to justice and supporting the Maryland legal services community.

Legislative Highlights from 2023

MLSC is grateful for two major legislative accomplishments in 2023.

HOUSE BILL 1050/SENATE BILL 756

Access to Counsel in Evictions - Funding

Sponsored by Delegate Kym Taylor and Senator Guy Guzzone, this law builds on legislation passed in 2021 and 2022 that established, and then funded, the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund by extending the \$14,000,000 funding stream through 2027. We know that tenants with representation are more likely to have a successful outcome than those without representation and are proud of the work our ACE grantees have already undertaken.

HOUSE BILL 760/SENATE BILL 351

Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Grant Program

Sponsored by Delegate Elizabeth Embry and Senator Mary Washington, this law established a new Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Grant Program that MLSC will administer, and included a non-lapsing funding appropriation in the Governor's budget to ensure everyone is able to properly plan for their family's future, regardless of income.

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

Eviction. Domestic violence. Unpaid wages.

People often think having an attorney in a civil matter is a luxury, and that civil actions are frivolous, or at the very least, of no true consequence, unlike the criminal justice system where so much is at stake. But in reality, the litigants seeking redress through the civil justice system often have everything on the line: including their home, their physical safety, and their ability to care for themselves and their families. At MLSC we understand the significance of these matters and we understand how having an attorney is a critical component in increasing a party's chances of achieving justice.

Thankfully the forty-six grantees funded by MLSC are dedicated to ensuring litigants do not have to navigate the complex systems of rent court, protective order hearings, or wage and hour claims alone. And that is just a sampling of the types of legal representation our grantees provide. All told, MLSC provided 34 operating and 45 special project grants to 40 grantees across Maryland, representing over 82,000 clients in all 23 counties as well as Baltimore City.

We are particularly excited to share an update on the Access to Counsel in Evictions (ACE) Program, which MLSC administers thanks to restricted, dedicated funding established by the legislature in 2021. Taking a coordinated approach with grantees and partners in outreach and education, ACE is a data-driven and client-centric response to the devastating impact of eviction on low-income households.

Of course, the start of the year is a time of transition and change for everyone as we prepare for the next twelve months. This is particularly true for MLSC this year as we said farewell to Deb Seltzer in November, who left the organization after more than seven years, including two as Executive Director. We are incredibly grateful for Deb's dedication and contributions to the legal services community. We also welcomed two new board members and look forward to gathering with the board and staff in person at an upcoming retreat in the new year.

Finally, we are most grateful for all our champions of civil legal aid who have supported MLSC this past year. Whether it was through legislative advocacy, monetary contributions, or pro bono volunteer hours, you all helped make the critical services of our grantees possible for thousands of low-income Marylanders. Thank you for your on-going support.

Onward together,



Debra A. Thomas, Esq.
Board Chair



Michelle Daugherty Siri, Esq.
Executive Director

In Fiscal Year 2023

MLSC made \$31.7 million in operating, Judicare and special project grants to 40 nonprofits serving low-income Marylanders.

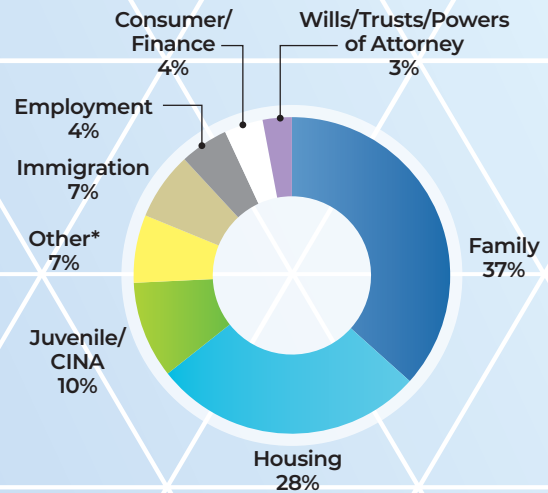
Our grantees closed over 82,000 cases (up nearly 10% from FY22), benefiting 160,800 people.

MLSC grantees closed cases in all 24 Maryland jurisdictions.

Over 2,600 attorneys donated more than 73,450 hours of service.

Legal aid providers helped clients obtain more than \$16.2 million in economic awards and avoid over \$18.8 million in costs through their cases, for issues such as child support, consumer judgments and discharged debts.

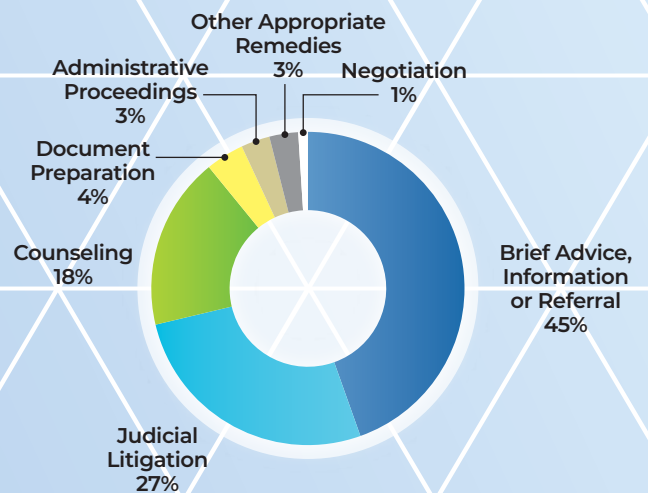
Types of Closed Cases



*Education, health, individual rights, income maintenance, and miscellaneous.

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Types of Service



Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

MLSC Grantees

In the spring of 2023, MLSC approved for the coming fiscal year \$24,878,769 in operating and intern grant awards to 41 organizations. In addition, through a \$2,595,500 grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts and other funds, MLSC approved funding in the amount of \$ 2,945,500 for the continuation of the Judicare project, which pays reduced fees to private attorneys for contested family law representation. Also, MLSC awarded extension funding of \$651,004 restricted for foreclosure prevention and \$909,618 restricted for workforce legal services, and \$3,647,880 restricted for immigration legal services. With funding from the Access to Counsel in Evictions program and other money, MLSC awarded \$17,115,217 for eviction prevention projects. With funding specially appropriated by the General Assembly in light of a recent constitutional amendment, MLSC approved \$2,500,000 in one-time funding to support education and expungement services related to cannabis legalization. In January 2024, MLSC approved one-time grants totaling \$898,131 and supplemental grants designed to help grantees adjust staff compensation totaling \$3,289,628.

More information about the grant process, application deadline, and current grants are available at www.mlsc.org.

- **Allegany Law Foundation**
- **Amara Legal Center, Inc.**
- **Annapolis Immigrant Justice Network**
- **Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center**
- **Ayuda**
- **Baltimore Bar Foundation Senior Legal Services**
- **CASA, Inc.**
- **Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition**
- **Catholic Charities of Baltimore**
- **Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington**
- **Child Justice, Inc.**
- **Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA)**
- **Civil Justice, Inc.**
- **Community Law Center**
- **Community Legal Services of Prince George's County**
- **DC Volunteer Lawyers Project**
- **Disability Rights Maryland**
- **Equal Justice Works**
- **FreeState Justice**
- **Harford County Bar Foundation**
- **Heartly House**
- **Homeless Persons Representation Project**
- **HopeWorks of Howard County**
- **House of Ruth Maryland**
- **Life Crisis Center**
- **Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center**
- **Maryland Legal Aid**
- **Maryland Public Interest Law Project**
- **Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service**
- **Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence**
- **Montgomery County Bar Foundation**
- **Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland**
- **Public Justice Center**
- **Sexual Assault Legal Institute**
- **Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC)**
- **Shore Legal Access**
- **Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy**
- **St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center**
- **Tahirih Justice Center**
- **United Way of Central Maryland**
- **University of Baltimore Foundation**
- **University of Maryland Carey School of Law Clinical Program**
- **Whitman-Walker Health**
- **Women's Law Center of Maryland**
- **World Relief**

Types of Grants



Operating

Part of MLSC's unique mission is to provide operating funding, helping legal services nonprofits across the state to keep their lights on and the lights of justice burning.



Internships & Fellowships

MLSC also funds internships for law students and fellowships for eviction defense attorneys, investing in a pipeline of public interest attorneys for years to come.



Family Law

The Maryland Judicare program, administered by MLSC and substantially funded through a grant from the Maryland Judiciary's Access to Justice Department, pays private attorneys reduced fees to accept contested family law cases.



Foreclosure

MLSC's Foreclosure Prevention Grant funds nonprofits serving low-income Marylanders facing foreclosure.



Workforce

With the Workforce Legal Services Grant, MLSC funds grantees to embed legal service providers at job training and other workforce development sites.



Eviction Prevention

This project funds full representation of residential tenants faced with eviction and includes the Access to Counsel in Evictions program created in 2021 by Maryland's General Assembly, which is under way with a goal of full implementation by October 2025.

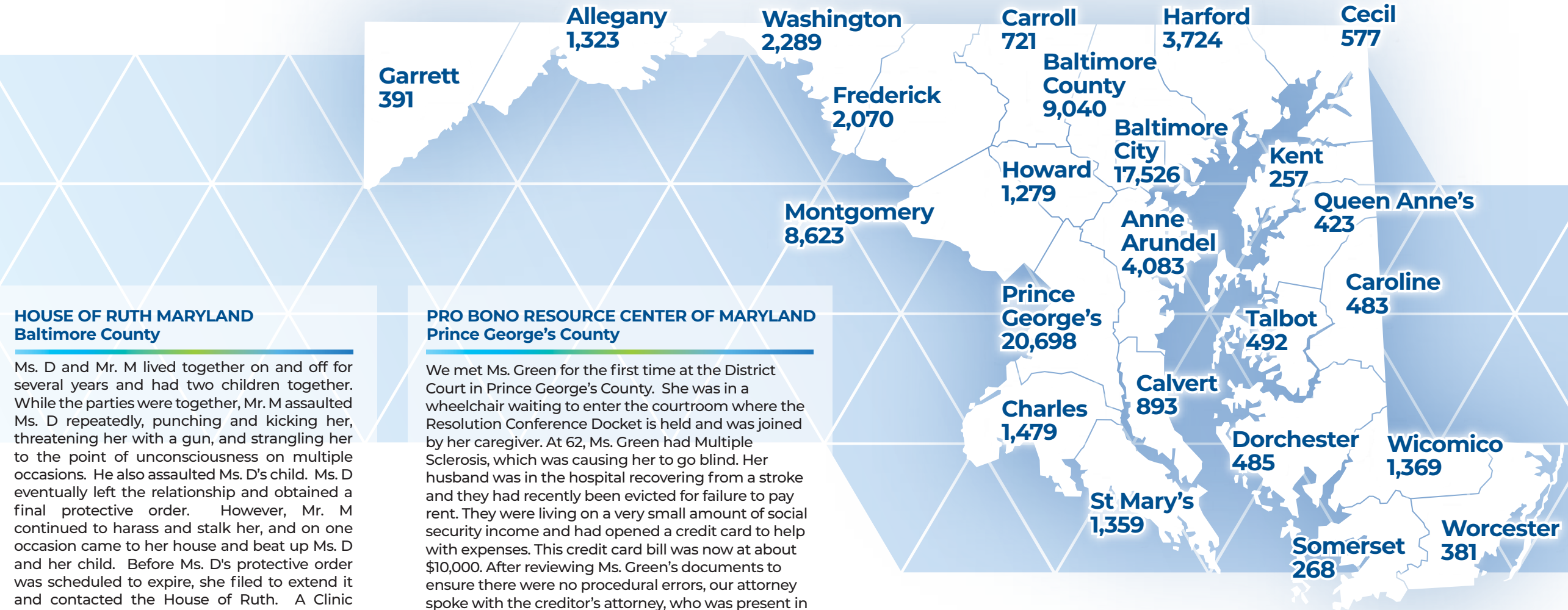
2023 Closed Cases by County

MARYLAND LEGAL AID Allegany County

Our client had a good livelihood and a spotless employment record with a local drug store where he delivered prescription medications to customers. Thus, he was shocked to be told that his job was in jeopardy due to "something that had been found in his background report." His employer had pulled his criminal record from CJIS, which was periodically done for all employees since they handled scheduled drugs. There was nothing to be seen other than an assault charge from approximately forty years ago. The charge was so old that it was no longer reflected in any court files, standard background databases or any other reasonably accessible records. We needed to discover the specifics of the charge and outcome, to expunge it so it would not compromise his employment. After significant work by MLA staff, we fully confirmed that the prosecution had made a final decision not to pursue the case and the case was expunged. The client was able to maintain his position with no further problems.

HARFORD COUNTY BAR FOUNDATION Harford County

Our client was suffering with memory loss. She was concerned that her memory was failing and wanted to have her Advance Directive and Personal Financial Power of Attorney completed before any further memory loss made it impossible. The client said that she had many questions and would need extra time with an attorney to ensure she understood the documents. An estate attorney who volunteers for HCBF's Determine Your Destiny Program met with the client twice to assist her with completing the documents free of charge. The client was thankful to HCBF for facilitating the connection with the attorney and said that she felt relieved after the completion of her documents.



HOUSE OF RUTH MARYLAND Baltimore County

Ms. D and Mr. M lived together on and off for several years and had two children together. While the parties were together, Mr. M assaulted Ms. D repeatedly, punching and kicking her, threatening her with a gun, and strangling her to the point of unconsciousness on multiple occasions. He also assaulted Ms. D's child. Ms. D eventually left the relationship and obtained a final protective order. However, Mr. M continued to harass and stalk her, and on one occasion came to her house and beat up Ms. D and her child. Before Ms. D's protective order was scheduled to expire, she filed to extend it and contacted the House of Ruth. A Clinic attorney represented Ms. D in her case to extend her protective order and the court granted her a two-year extension.

PRO BONO RESOURCE CENTER OF MARYLAND Prince George's County

We met Ms. Green for the first time at the District Court in Prince George's County. She was in a wheelchair waiting to enter the courtroom where the Resolution Conference Docket is held and was joined by her caregiver. At 62, Ms. Green had Multiple Sclerosis, which was causing her to go blind. Her husband was in the hospital recovering from a stroke and they had recently been evicted for failure to pay rent. They were living on a very small amount of social security income and had opened a credit card to help with expenses. This credit card bill was now at about \$10,000. After reviewing Ms. Green's documents to ensure there were no procedural errors, our attorney spoke with the creditor's attorney, who was present in the courtroom, negotiating a complete dismissal based on the client's hardship. Ms. Green and her caregiver were ecstatic - they had no idea that such a resolution was even possible. Ms. Green burst into tears and hugged both the attorney and paralegal. It was the best possible outcome for her.

SHORE LEGAL ACCESS Wicomico County

Our client sought legal help due to concerns that her child was improperly expelled from school, that the school was not following the child's IEP, and that discriminatory remarks were made to her child by teachers. Through the volunteer attorney's successful advocacy, the child was re-admitted to school and the school committed to follow the child's IEP. Our client stated in an e-mail: "I never felt like because of my financial situation that anyone would give as much effort or attention to my matter but the attorney gave 100%. I also remember speaking with you and you doing your best to assist me. Thank you. I will never forget what the attorney did to help my son."

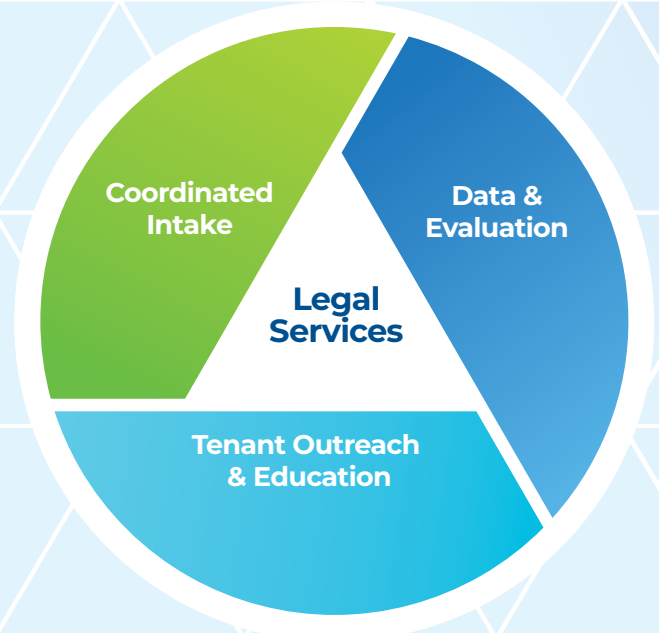
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY Prince George's County

Our clients were deaf tenants who had experienced significant mold issues and a rodent infestation in their apartment. When their landlord took them to court for failure to pay rent, they opened a rent escrow, a legal defense in which tenants in an unsafe property pay rent to the court until the landlord makes repairs. The county inspected the property and confirmed that serious defects were present in the home. Despite the rent escrow, the landlord refused to make any repairs. Our attorneys requested that the tenants be reimbursed for the full amount of rent that they had paid to the court, which totaled more than \$3,000, and that the failure to pay rent case be dismissed. Both requests were granted. Through our advocacy, the tenants were also allowed to terminate their lease without penalty so that they could find safe housing.



Access to Counsel in Evictions

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly created the Access to Counsel in Evictions program via HB 18/Ch. 746 and designated Maryland Legal Services Corporation as the administrator. MLSC is phasing in ACE over a three-year period, with a statutory goal of full implementation by October 1, 2025. The statute required MLSC to prioritize funding services in jurisdictions that designated their own funds for eviction prevention legal services, and the ACE program launched in 11 jurisdictions in FY23. Other components of ACE include a coordinated intake system, tenant outreach and education, and evaluation.



Legal Services

During FY2023, MLSC made the first round of ACE grants to eight nonprofit legal services providers and both Maryland law schools. A total of 4,800 tenants were served in FY2023. Of the 3,795 cases where full representation was provided through ACE in FY2023, 77% of tenant households avoided disruptive displacement. ACE grantees also helped Maryland residents receive more than \$415,000 in housing judgments and avoid more than \$4.5 million in direct costs. These figures include cases closed under Baltimore City's Right to Counsel in Evictions program, which is separately funded by the City.

Tenant Outreach & Education

MLSC selected seven community groups to conduct outreach and provide education to tenants regarding tenants' rights and how to access legal representation through ACE. Outreach and education efforts were purposefully timed after the expansion of legal services so that legal providers could establish their services and ensure their capacity to serve new tenants referred by the outreach providers. Outreach contractors met in late FY23 to plan, develop shared messaging, and share best practices. The contractors are using a variety of outreach methods – including door-knocking, tabling at community events, digital marketing and more – to inform tenants of their rights and of the existence of the ACE program. Contractors will focus their outreach on Phase I jurisdictions to begin the program, expanding to Phase II once the legal services are established. Even though outreach efforts launched late in the year, contractors have already reached a significant number of tenants. Through both targeted efforts and outreach at established community events, they provided information to more than 12,600 tenants. The contractors have also established or strengthened relationships with the legal services providers to offer know-your-rights presentations and streamlined referrals.

Coordinated Intake

MLSC granted funds to the United Way of Central Maryland, which is working with Civil Justice and A2J Tech to develop a coordinated intake system for ACE. After intense development, testing and training, the coordinated intake system soft-launched in Baltimore City in May 2023. Tenants may apply for representation through ACE by calling 211 or visiting legalhelpmd.org. In the first two months of the pilot, 22 callers completed the coordinated intake process and received legal assistance from one of MLSC's grantees. The coordinated intake system has since fully launched in Baltimore (October 2023) and will expand to all other jurisdictions statewide by October 2025.

Data & Evaluation

MLSC contracted with Stout Risius Ross to evaluate the ACE program. During FY23, Stout worked with MLSC and the legal services providers to develop an extensive list of data elements to be collected for program evaluation. Twenty data elements will be collected in same-day representation cases and fifty-six data elements will be collected in all other ACE cases. The legal services providers began collecting and reporting on these data elements to Stout at the start of FY2024. Stout will use the data to build visualizations to aid in program evaluation, further targeting of outreach and education, and to identify and respond to developing trends

Annual Awards

Each year MLSC solicits nominations and presents awards to individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to the provision of legal services to low-income Marylanders. MLSC held its annual reception on November 16, 2023 at Westminster Hall in Baltimore. MLSC Board Chair Debra Thomas and Maryland Supreme Court Chief Justice Matthew Fader presented the awards. Former MLSC Board Chair and US Senator Benjamin Cardin provided opening remarks.



Seated: Joanna Armentrout Shapiro; Jennifer Vido; Elva E. Tillman; Catherine McGuire. Standing: Hon. Matthew Fader; Michelle Daugherty Siri; Aja' Mallory; Reba Letsa; Paula Erdie; Debra Thomas; Catherine Bledsoe.

Joanna Armentrout Shapiro, former director of the Frederick County Family Law Clinic and former MLSC board chair Senator Benjamin Cardin, for whom the Distinguished Service Award is named.



Award Recipients

Arthur W. Machen, Jr. Award
Elva E. Tillman

Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award
Joanna Armentrout Shapiro

Rising Star Award
Reba Letsa
Aja' Mallory

William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award
Catherine McGuire
Jennifer Vido

Herbert S. Garten Public Citizen Award
MAC Inc.

IOLTA Honor Roll

This joint initiative of the Maryland State Bar Association and MLSC consists of financial institutions that pay premium rates on IOLTA accounts, supporting critically needed legal aid for low-income Marylanders. We salute these institutions and encourage our supporters to patronize Honor Roll members.



MLSC is pleased to acknowledge the 2023 awards reception sponsors

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MARYLAND
THE DAILY RECORD

MLSC Revenue

MLSC revenue for grants is primarily generated from the MLSC Fund, which is composed of three special funding sources:

Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) held by Maryland-licensed lawyers

A surcharge on certain Circuit and District Court filing fees

\$8,000,000 from the Abandoned Property Fund

The MLSC Fund Appropriation is set in the State's budget each year based on projected revenues. The appropriation sets an upper limit on the amount that can be spent but does not guarantee the Fund will receive the full amount. MLSC receives the amount actually collected in the Fund, up to the appropriation limit.

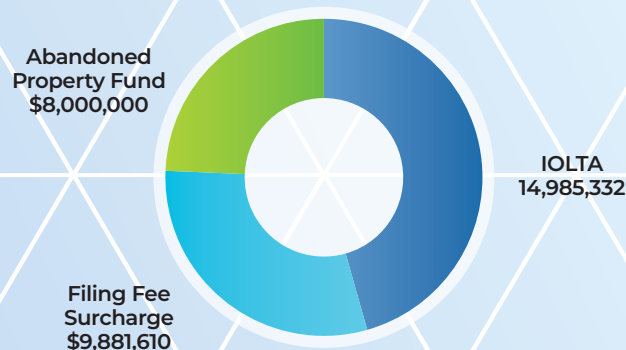
Summarized Financial Information

Statement of Net Position June 30, 2023

Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 6,685,696
Investments	17,285,186
Receivable, IOLTA Receipts	1,864,955
Due from State of Maryland	589,221
Grants Receivable	7,080,307
Grants Advances	551,903
Other Receivables	71,343
Prepaid Expenses	17,212
Capital Assets - Net of Accumulated Depreciation & Amortization	138,199
Deferred Compensation Investments	129,500
Other Assets	3,360
Total Assets	34,416,882
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	416,927
Deferred Revenue	10,145,781
Due to State of Maryland	1,907,246
Deferred Compensation Obligation	129,500
Right-of-Use Leases	103,700
Total Liabilities	12,703,154
Net Position	
Net Investment in Capital Assets	138,199
Unrestricted	20,006,706
Temporarily Restricted	1,568,823
Total Net Position	\$21,713,728

MLSC Fund Revenue

The FY23 MLSC Fund appropriation was set at \$24.9 million, and total revenue in the Fund reached just under \$32.9 million.



Statement of Activities

For the Year Ended June 30, 2023

Program Expenses - Legal Assistance	\$32,756,860
General Revenues	
State of Maryland Appropriations - Legal Assistance	24,900,000
Government Grants	4,068,098
Increased Access to Counsel Programs - AOC Funds	3,524,770
Judicare Program - AOC Funds	2,273,000
Access to Counsel in Evictions Program - AOC Funds	2,189,898
Cannabis Program - AOC Funds	1,466,441
State of Maryland Housing Security Grant	687,084
Contributions	17,770
Annual Awards Reception	30,625
Investment Income, Net	994,425
Total General Revenues	40,152,111
Increase in Net Position	7,395,251
Net Position at Beginning of Year	14,318,477
Net Position at End of Year	\$21,713,728

The report is a summary of the financial statements incorporated in the annual audit report issued by Gross, Mendelsohn, & Associates, P.A. for the year ended June 30, 2023. The complete financial statements and notes are available upon request from MLSC.

*See page 5 for grant commitments made at the close of FY 2023.

MLSC Board

Debra A. Thomas, Esq., Chair
Baltimore City
Law Offices of Debra A. Thomas, P.C.

Allison Banks
Baltimore City
NeoSystems, LLC

Mike Bellis
St. Mary's County
Charles Regional Medical Center
Foundation

Catherine A. Bledsoe, Esq.
Howard County
Office of the Attorney General

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Anne Arundel County
District Court of Maryland, Anne Arundel
County

Terry Jackson
Harford County
NASA

Hon. C. Philip Nichols Jr.
Prince George's County
Circuit Court for Prince George's County
(Retired)

Hon. Martha F. Rasin
Kent County
District Court of Maryland (Retired)

Phyllis G. Scalettar, Ph.D.
Montgomery County
Corporate Advisor

Michelle Daugherty Siri, Secretary
(ex officio)
Maryland Legal Services Corporation

MLSC Staff



Pictured left to right: Athana Kontinos, Shawdae Harrison, Dave Pantzer, Michelle Daugherty Siri, Karen Wabeke, Cindy Wallace, Casondra Kus

Michelle Daugherty Siri, Esq.
Executive Director

Kaa Andam
IOLTA Compliance Manager

Shawdae Harrison
Operations Coordinator

Athana Kontinos
Grants Compliance Manager

Casondra Kus
Grants Coordinator

Dave Pantzer, Esq.
Deputy Director

Karen Wabeke, Esq.
Program Manager, Access to Counsel in
Evictions

Cindy Wallace
Finance and Human Resources Director

About MLSC

The Maryland Legal Services Corporation, established in 1982 by the Maryland General Assembly, is a nonprofit organization governed by a nine-member Board of Directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. MLSC distributes funds from the Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program and other sources to nonprofit organizations for the provision of civil legal services to low-income Marylanders. MLSC currently provides funding to over 40 nonprofit grantees throughout Maryland to ensure that eligible clients in all areas of the state have access to legal assistance. MLSC also administers Maryland's Access to Counsel in Evictions program.

**FUNDING LEGAL ASSISTANCE
SERVING THE ENDS OF JUSTICE**

About IOLTA

Attorneys routinely receive client funds to be held in trust for future use. In the case of amounts that are small or to be held for a short time, attorneys must place these funds into Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA). The generated interest is used by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation for grants to programs that provide civil legal services to low-income Marylanders.



MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION