



LAWVO
LEGAL AID OF WESTERN OHIO, INC.

ABLE
ADVOCATES
FOR BASIC LEGAL
EQUALITY, INC.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Rebuilding & Reconnecting

Mission Statement

Ensuring justice for all, no matter one's income...

ABLE and **LAWO** represent individuals and groups of people living in poverty in civil (non-criminal) legal matters. We are committed to protecting the rights of people with much at stake and nowhere else to turn. Through litigation and other advocacy, we prevent homelessness, domestic abuse, and discrimination. We improve opportunities for education, housing, employment, and access to health care and public benefits for people living in poverty in 32 counties in western Ohio, and agricultural workers throughout Ohio. ABLE also represents immigrants and refugees throughout the state. In all cases, LAWO and ABLE work to address the root causes of poverty by seeking systemic solutions.

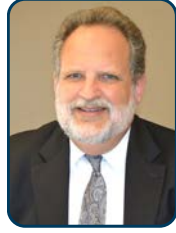
Without legal aid, tens of thousands of people would go without legal help when they need it.



Together, we do the community justice.

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Welcome Message

JANET HALES

KEVIN MULDER

ABLE Executive Director LAWO Executive Director

REBUILDING AND RECONNECTING

On behalf of Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) and Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO), we are pleased to present our 2021 Annual Report. This year’s themes are “Rebuilding and Reconnecting”—two actions we quickly embraced as we operated through a post-pandemic world. We could not have expanded our impact on people living in poverty without the continued support of our generous donors, funding partners, and legal community fundraising ambassadors or the unbreakable resolve and commitment provided by our staff of caring legal and administrative professionals.

2021 was a year of hybrid interactions and strategies. While much of our legal assistance was provided through video, telephone, and email correspondence, including virtual law clinics with our community partners in Toledo and Dayton, we continued with our commitment to reach some of the most underserved populations in our communities, rebuilding our outreach strategies to include multiple touchpoints. Special focuses were placed on Ohio’s agricultural worker and immigrant communities with in-person outreach action and on survivors of domestic violence who live with disabilities. We also saw an increase in legal needs and requests involving housing, education, and veterans’ issues.

Housing legal needs and representation was an area of concentration for both LAWO and ABLE. A tenant Right to Counsel ordinance was passed by Toledo City Council in the fall, with research and guidance provided by ABLE legal staff. As a result, \$250,000 in funding has been allocated toward LAWO’s eviction defense work in the Toledo Municipal Court. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected ABLE as one of 10 legal services organizations nationwide to receive an inaugural grant from its new Eviction Protection Grant Program. The \$1 million grant helped ABLE and LAWO to reconnect with our rural communities surrounding Dayton with an eviction prevention program throughout western Ohio.

In the latter part of 2021, ABLE and LAWO hosted our first in-person events since the pandemic hit. In September, the Toledo legal community gathered for a happy hour-style event called Justice Straight Up at Toledo Spirits, in lieu of our annual Northwest Ohio Access to Justice Awards Dinner. The event was the first to encourage legal professionals to reconnect in almost two years and helped us raise more than \$54,000 to support legal services for people living in poverty in northwest Ohio.

Internally, we experienced significant growth as we filled critical positions with attorneys, paralegals, and administrative assistants, as well as key roles in our Grants, Human Resources, Development, and Communications departments. We also promoted several of our long-term employees into leadership and managerial positions, as their guidance and expertise navigating immense challenges during the pandemic was key to us operating at full capacity. Through all these updates with personnel, we placed an intentional emphasis on our diversity and inclusion hiring practices, especially in hiring and retaining a diverse leadership team, and we’re proud to have built a team of professionals who represent our community.

Please review the full scope of our growth in 2021 in this Annual Report—all of it made possible because of generous donors like you.

Janet E. Hales

Kevin C. Mulder

Practice Group Milestones

LAWO and **ABLE** utilize collective effort and synergy to improve outcomes for our clients. Internally, we have developed legal practice groups that address specific issues. Below are some highlights from 2021.

Agricultural Workers and Immigrant Rights

Our **Agricultural Worker and Immigrant Rights Practice Group** members conducted outreach to 136 agricultural labor camps in 31 of the 57 counties that were identified as having seasonal and migrant farmworkers, reaching 448 housing units and 1,962 workers in 2021. A key area of the outreach was agricultural workers' mental health, and we communicated with agricultural workers, immigrants, and refugees on their right to access mental and physical health services, including Covid-19 vaccinations, testing, and treatment. Additionally, LAWO distributed 1,305 "legal bags" containing materials in English and Spanish, including a welcome letter to farmworkers, the Harvest Calendar, work record booklet, H-2A brochure, tax brochure,

Housing Justice and Community Economic Development

In September 2021, Toledo City Council enacted a **tenant Right to Counsel ordinance**. Toledo was the 14th jurisdiction in the U.S. to pass right to counsel legislation. ABLE began collaborating with the United Way of Greater Toledo and local legislators to begin planning and advocating for

Right to Counsel legislation in 2020, drafted the ordinance, and worked with the City of Toledo and others to add to the ordinance, including \$250,000 in funding for LAWO's eviction defense work in Toledo Municipal Court. The ordinance guarantees counsel for all tenants in eviction proceedings if they are at 200% or below the federal poverty level.

The following month, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected ABLE as one of 10 legal services organizations nationwide to receive an inaugural grant from its new **Eviction Protection Grant Program**. The \$1 million grant helped ABLE expand an eviction prevention program into rural areas of seven counties in western Ohio and allows LAWO and ABLE to provide legal representation in eviction actions, advocate for tenant protections in local policies and programs, coordinate with rental assistance programs, and provide legal education and information for renters through a new hotline.

Healthcare and Economic Stability

ABLE's Health and Public Benefits practice group developed a screening tool in 2021 to target health disparities affecting Black people, including higher rates of certain diseases. In 2022, the practice group will prioritize cases involving health equity for communities of color.

Medical-Legal Partnerships for Children

Significant progress on ABLE's **Dayton MLPC Opioid Project** was made this

Practice Group Milestones

year. The innovative partnership between healthcare providers, courts, social services agencies, and lawyers works to resolve legal and social issues affecting children and their families who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic. We provide trauma-informed civil legal services to stabilize families, increase their economic security, and ensure children receive appropriate educational services and supports through a multi-year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. In 2021, ABLE's Toledo MLPC began a new project focused on children with **Sickle Cell Disease**, due to the racial justice needs for legal services for all the impacts of sickle cell on the child's education, well-being, and health.

Safety and Stability for Domestic Violence Survivors

LAWO's response to survivors has been to integrate trauma-informed, client-centered practices in our service delivery and staff development to both promote and improve access to justice. The **Justice for Families Project** was launched in 2021 and is composed of a multidisciplinary team including LAWO, the Lucas County Juvenile Court, the Children's Rights Collaborative, and Bethany House.

The project seeks to reduce violent crime against women and enhance victim safety through advocacy and supportive services for families experiencing domestic violence.

Fairness in Education

In 2021, ABLE filed a systemic complaint with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) for students with disabilities in Dayton and continues to monitor implementation of systemic changes. ABLE discovered that Dayton Public Schools had not provided necessary continuous services for children with disabilities for several years, and the district admitted the violation of the law.

Access to Justice

LAWO recognizes the importance of access to justice for all and that some policies and procedures may unintentionally hinder access for certain populations. In 2021, LAWO staff reevaluated and modified our service delivery methods to meet client needs and improve access to justice. LAWO recognizes Limited-English Proficiency clients face additional barriers. We strive to increase the number of LEP clients we serve each year to meet their unique legal needs.

Empowering Older Adults

LAWO's **Senior Project** continued to provide legal services to older adults despite the challenges of the pandemic. In 2021, LAWO successfully represented older adults in consumer debt collection cases, bankruptcy cases to protect income or a home, housing conditions and housing preservation cases, and health care and public benefits cases.

Practice Group Milestones

Consumer and Economic Justice

ABLE staff continued to work on digital divide matters that affect low-income people, helping to implement new federal programs like the Emergency Broadband benefit, which has become the **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)**. ABLE also met with City of Dayton, Dayton Metro Library, and school leaders to encourage them to use and promote the program. Additionally, ABLE helped to design a municipal broadband network for Yellow Springs, which will provide the ACP benefit to qualifying low-income residents.

Veterans

LAWO and ABLE continued to lead advice and **counsel clinics for veterans** in partnership with the Dayton VA and St. Vincent DePaul's Veteran Services Program. Through these clinics, veterans received legal advice, limited representation, and full representation on housing, consumer law, reentry/expungement, driver's license reinstatement, family law, and estate planning matters.

Pro Bono Community Work

LAWO's Pro Bono Team, along with the Toledo Bar Association, established a virtual training video as well as materials for assisting pro bono attorneys in helping clients seal their criminal records.

STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Morgan's Story: Social Security"

People with disabilities often want to work to contribute their skills to their community and experience the independence many of us take for granted. But even part-time paid work can result in losing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments. And recipients can be required to pay back amounts that are deemed "overpayments." Overpayments happen when the Social Security Administration finds that a recipient has received payments when they should not have. If a person is deemed ineligible for a month – even if they were only over-income by a few dollars – they must pay back the amount received for the entire month they are deemed ineligible. If a person doesn't understand their obligations and rights, they can end up owing thousands of dollars and not receive any SSI or SSDI while they are in repayment. The results can be devastating and have a domino effect of financial instability in the lives of people who were just trying to get back into the workforce on a part-time basis.

Morgan*, a resident of Allen County challenged by physical and mental disabilities, experienced this firsthand. She was excited to begin a new job after receiving SSI and SSDI for a few years, not realizing how her new part-time employment could affect her benefits. As a result, she began incurring "overpayments." When she contacted ABLE, she had just been notified of her fifth overpayment. She became frustrated and quit her job because she was afraid of incurring another overpayment. Thankfully, Morgan reached out for help.

An ABLE attorney met with Morgan and explained the work incentive rules and assisted the client with filing for a waiver of her approximately \$8,000 in overpayments. Shortly after we accepted the case and filed the overpayment waiver, the Social Security office mistakenly withheld Morgan's entire check in violation of Social Security regulations and the waiver process rules. Morgan was in danger of eviction because she did not have the money to pay her rent. Her lawyer contacted the Social Security office to resolve the situation and assisted Morgan with getting an emergency check issued.

Her attorney was also able to negotiate a repayment plan for all five overpayments, with a total of only \$10 being withheld from her check monthly. Shortly after the overpayment situation was resolved, Morgan felt comfortable returning to work. She is now working part-time and continues to receive her SSI and SSDI benefits. Her financial situation is much more stable, she did not become homeless, and she was relieved and happy about the outcome of the case.

**Name changed for privacy*

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STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Rudy's Story: Plan Ahead & Protect Yourself Legal Series for Seniors"

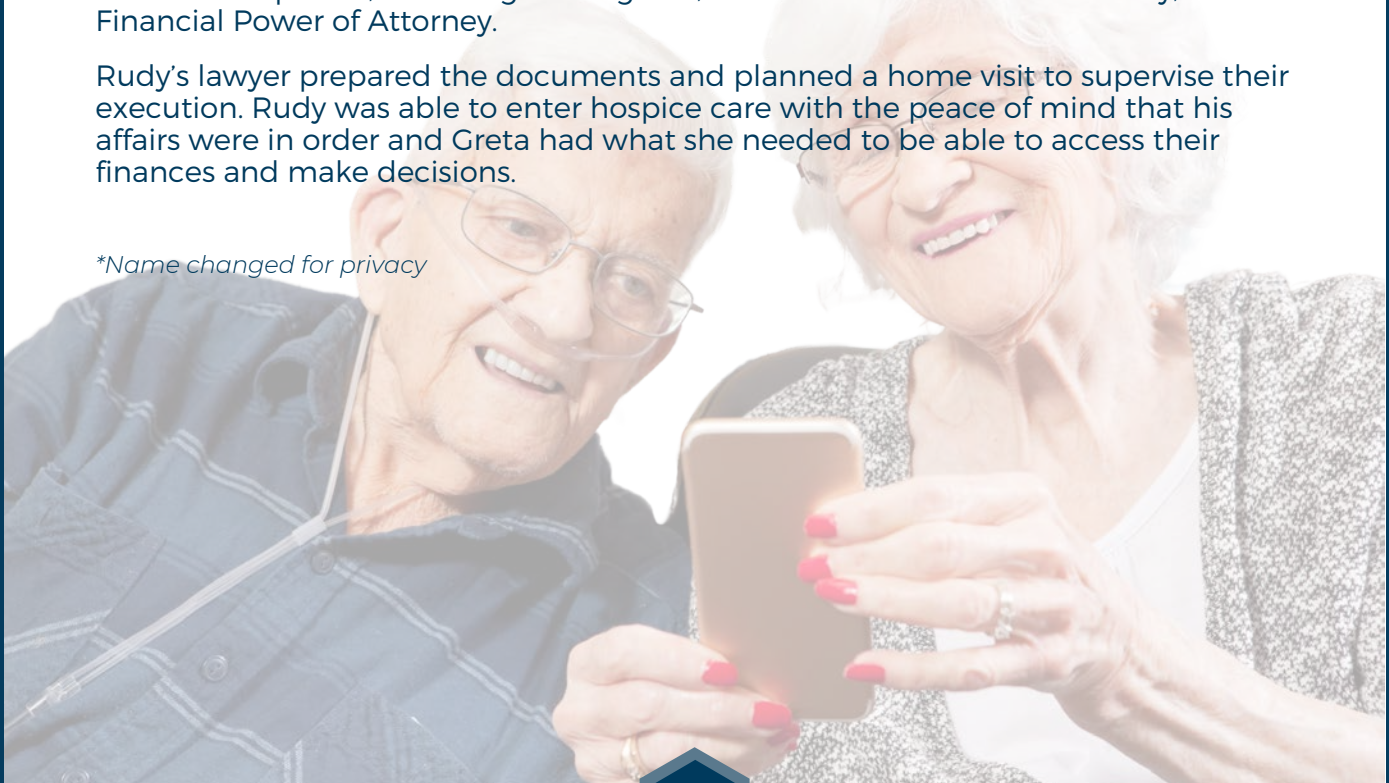
Rudy* and Greta,* his loving wife of 60 years, had kept their finances apart for the entire length of their marriage. However, when Rudy became ill with terminal cancer, he and Greta were faced with some imminent end-of-life decisions. Rudy was particularly concerned about Greta receiving access to everything she would need to navigate the difficult days ahead, so he contacted LAWO for assistance.

Rudy qualified for LAWO's "Plan Ahead and Protect Yourself Legal Series for Seniors," a free service for low-income older adults to help them understand their legal rights, avoid abuse and victimization, and protect their safety, assets, income, and independence. The program includes legal classes, clinics, cases, and other services—with an emphasis on prevention, individual empowerment, and multi-disciplinary collaboration. Rudy participated in a one-on-one legal clinic by telephone.

During the phone appointment, Rudy's LAWO attorney explained in detail all the planning options that were available and answered Rudy's questions with empathy and support. By the end of the call, Rudy identified several documents he wanted to have completed, including a Living Will, a Health Care Power of Attorney, and a Financial Power of Attorney.

Rudy's lawyer prepared the documents and planned a home visit to supervise their execution. Rudy was able to enter hospice care with the peace of mind that his affairs were in order and Greta had what she needed to be able to access their finances and make decisions.

**Name changed for privacy*



2021 Combined Record of Service

IN ACTION.....

Requests for Legal Assistance



11,657

(251 applications carried over from previous period)

Cases Carried Over from Previous Period

2,740

Cases Opened



4,269

4,450

Cases Closed

Cases Remaining Open



2,559

(7,009 total cases worked on in 2021)



Individuals Helped

17,490

Total Monetary Awards for Clients



\$9,693,017*

\$2,768,583 Monthly Awards Times 36 Months

\$6,924,434 Total of Lump Sum and Annual Awards

\$9,693,017 Total Monetary Awards

Approximately 17,500 people were served by ABLÉ and LAWÓ legal staff and paralegals in 2021. Countless others received help through materials and information that appear on our websites, pro bono legal assistance clinics, legal presentations, and continuing legal education trainings for lawyers. Our staff also visited homeless and domestic violence shelters, senior centers, health clinics, nursing homes, and agricultural labor camps to make people aware of their legal rights.

2021 Operating Revenue & Expenses



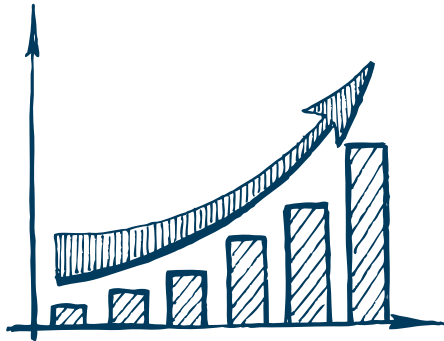
This report is related to **ABLE** and **LAWO**'s operations budget and does not include revenue or expenses related to depreciation, the 50 Years of Fairness and Justice Campaign, the Campaign for the Center for Equal Justice, or the Legal Aid Foundation of Western Ohio.



2021 ABLE Operating Revenues and Expenses	
<i>Support and Revenue</i>	
Grants and Contracts	2,734,735.00
Paycheck Protection Program Grant	1,075,600.00
OAJF	3,525,662.00
Employee Retention Credit	301,036.00
Fundraising and Special Events	846,353.00
Other Income	122,735.00
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>8,606,121.00</i>
Transfer to Reserves	(1,782,579.00)
Total	6,823,542.00

<i>Expenses</i>	
Compensation and Benefits	4,836,097.00
Operating Costs	1,465,781.00
Contracted Services	294,441.00
Travel, Support and Training	50,713.00
Other	176,510.00
Total	6,823,542.00

2021 Operating Revenue & Expenses



2021 LAWO Operating Revenues and Expenses	
<i>Support and Revenue</i>	
Grants and Contracts	1,459,208.00
Paycheck Protection Program Grant	950,000.00
LSC	3,186,636.00
OAJF	436,239.00
Employee Retention Credit	330,966.00
Fundraising and Special Events	95,017.00
Other Income	98,945.00
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>6,557,011.00</i>
Transfer to Reserves	(47,028.00)
Total	6,509,983.00

<i>Expenses</i>	
Compensation and Benefits	4,926,937.00
Operating Costs	797,569.00
Contracted Services	652,511.00
Travel, Support and Training	128,081.00
Other	4,885.00
Total	6,509,983.00



2021 Boards of Trustees

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Attorney
Schaffer & Associates, LPA
Toledo

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Client Representative &
Community Advocate
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Rebecca Fahim

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Marathon Petroleum
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Findlay

Twila R. Ferguson

Attorney
Child Support Enforcement
Agency
Toledo

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Ohio Supreme Court Justice,
Retired
Toledo

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Attorney
The Hearn Law Office
Wapakoneta

Barry F. Luse

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Fremont

Eve Mitro

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Community Advocate
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Attorney
Leslie Murray Law
Huron

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Family Services
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Adjudication
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Shunta Weatherspoon

Client Representative &
Community Advocate
Dayton

Molly Williams

Client Representative &
Community Advocate
Yellow Springs

Mechelle Zarou

Attorney
Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick,
LLP
Toledo

STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Maya's Story: Immigration/Asylum"

Maya's* story begins several years ago when she fled her native Honduras with her two young daughters after suffering years of brutal violence—including death threats—by her former partner. Maya reported her partner's violence to the Honduran police multiple times, but the police refused to protect her. Maya and her daughters were detained at the southern U.S. border for several weeks until U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) released them, and they came to Dayton, Ohio.

An ABLE attorney represented Maya and her daughters in applications for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture before the Cleveland Immigration Court. However, in 2018, the immigration judge denied Maya's applications. Despite nearly eight hours of consistent testimony, the immigration judge found it "implausible" that Maya was a victim of domestic violence because she had attended college and had operated her own business at one point in her life.

ABLE appealed the immigration judge's absurd findings to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). In September 2020, the BIA issued an opinion finding the immigration judge's decision was not well-reasoned and remanded the case. ABLE attorneys successfully applied for Special Immigrant Juvenile status, a status for minors for whom it is unsafe to reunite with one or both parents. ABLE requested that ICE attorneys exercise prosecutorial discretion and dismiss Maya and her two daughters' removal proceedings as they were no longer enforcement priorities under the new presidential administration. ICE agreed to dismiss both daughters' removal proceedings but declined to exercise prosecutorial discretion for Maya. Both daughters are now waiting for their priority dates to become current so they can apply to adjust status to lawful permanent residence.

Meanwhile, Maya has become a valuable member of her community. She has purchased and rehabilitated two houses and started her own cleaning company, where she employs several other women. ABLE continues to represent Maya as she seeks permanent safety and freedom from persecution in the United States. An individual asylum hearing for Maya is scheduled for November 2022.

**Name changed for privacy*

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STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

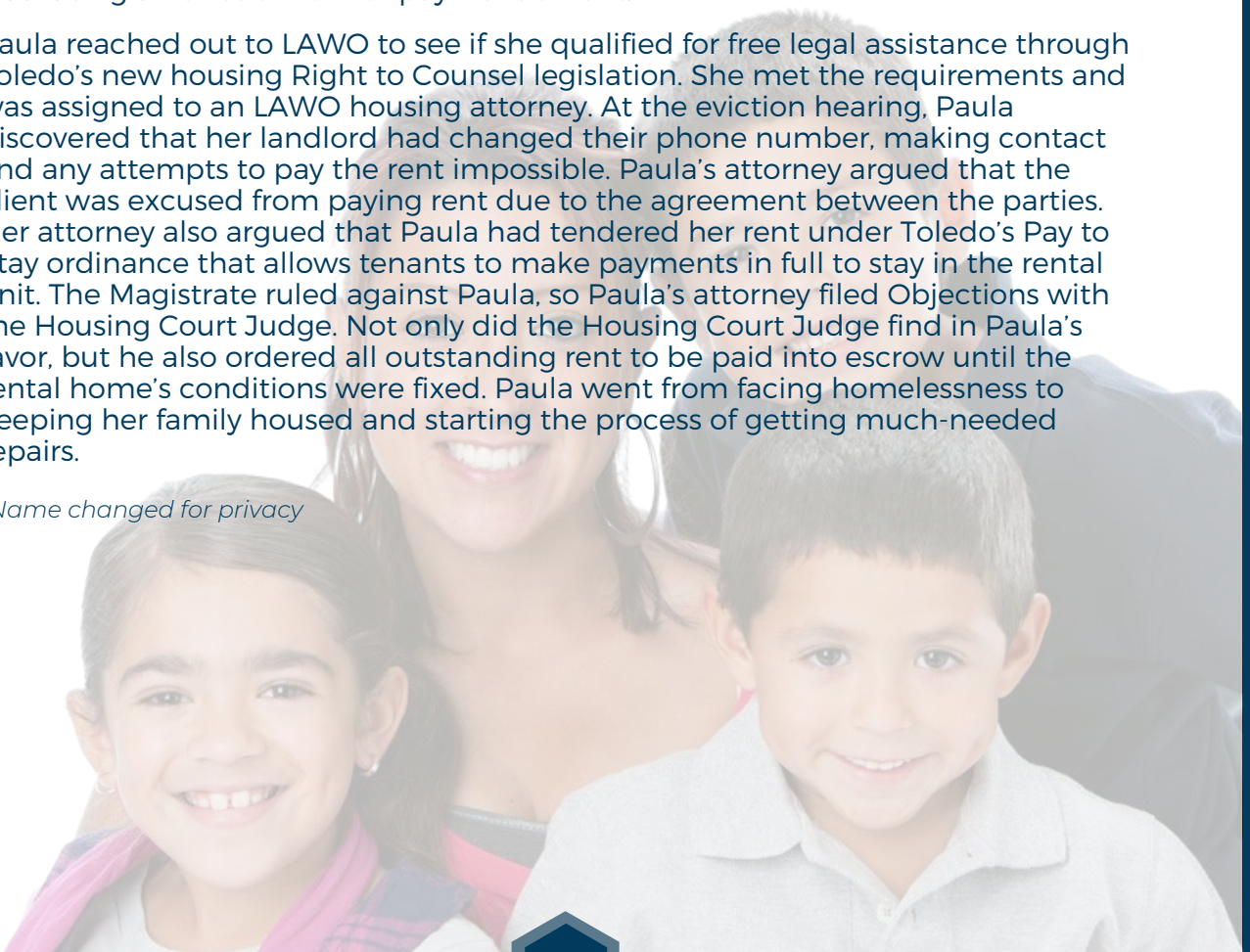
"Paula's Story: Housing/Pay-to-Stay"

When Paula* and her three children moved into their rental home, they immediately discovered the entire first floor was without electricity. Given the difficulties securing housing in the rental market and the landlord's promises to fix the electricity, Paula and her family continued to live there.

Conditions continued to deteriorate, however, and Paula discovered mold in the bathroom, water leaking from the upstairs bathroom into the downstairs kitchen and rotting stairs leading to the back door. After Paula had discussed these issues with her landlord in detail, she was told to hang onto the rent until the problems were fixed. Unfortunately, the issues were never resolved, and Paula was unable to contact her landlord after this conversation. A short time later, Paula learned she was facing an eviction for nonpayment of rent.

Paula reached out to LAWO to see if she qualified for free legal assistance through Toledo's new housing Right to Counsel legislation. She met the requirements and was assigned to an LAWO housing attorney. At the eviction hearing, Paula discovered that her landlord had changed their phone number, making contact and any attempts to pay the rent impossible. Paula's attorney argued that the client was excused from paying rent due to the agreement between the parties. Her attorney also argued that Paula had tendered her rent under Toledo's Pay to Stay ordinance that allows tenants to make payments in full to stay in the rental unit. The Magistrate ruled against Paula, so Paula's attorney filed Objections with the Housing Court Judge. Not only did the Housing Court Judge find in Paula's favor, but he also ordered all outstanding rent to be paid into escrow until the rental home's conditions were fixed. Paula went from facing homelessness to keeping her family housed and starting the process of getting much-needed repairs.

**Name changed for privacy*



2021 pro·bono

Together, we do the community justice.

More than **5,000 hours** of legal services were donated by volunteer attorneys who handled cases for in 2021. Those 278 volunteers engaged in pro bono legal assistance through **LAWO's Pro Bono Legal Services Program, ABLE, and the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project.** LAWO also supports the **Toledo Bar Association's Pro Bono Legal Services Program.** With their assistance, we expanded the legal services provided by ABLE and LAWO's staff attorneys.

If you would like to provide your legal assistance, please contact the **Private Attorney Involvement Program** by visiting probono.lawolaw.org or call **(419) 930-2479.**

GDVLP, LAWO & ABLE's 2021 Pro Bono Partners

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Zachary S. Arnold
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Thomas Baggott
Ashley Bailes
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Shannon Bockelman
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Kent Depoorter
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Brandi Doniere
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Roberta S. Fay
Elliot Feit
Maggie Fett (law student)
Robert B. Fitzgerald
James P. Fleisher
Jason N. Flower
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Claire Gaglione
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Tom Hahn
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Jennifer H. Harrison
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Audrey Sweeney
Lester R. Thompson
Ira H. Thomsen
Michael Todak
Jeremy M. Tomb
Bryan Tschanz
Nathan VanDenBerghe

Navay M. Vaughn
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Jared Wagner
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David H. Wallace
Matthew Walsh
Melinda Warthman
Mark D. Webb
Ashley Weis
Cathy Weithman
Lucinda Weller
Cynthia L. Westwood
Brian L. Wildermuth
Jane Williamson
Misty Wood
Fred L. Young
Sarah Young (law student)
Monica Yvonne
Andrew J. Zeigler
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**Area Office on Aging of
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Support for legal services for seniors.



**Ohio Access to Justice
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Major source of funding to support our work addressing the unmet civil legal needs of low-income and underserved Ohioans.



Fifth-Third Bank

Support for legal services.



2021 Funding Partners

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Support for legal services.

Area Agency on Aging, PSA3

Legal assistance for seniors in Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Mercer, and Van Wert counties.

Area Agency on Aging, PSA5

Legal assistance to seniors in Ashland, Crawford, Huron, Richland, Seneca, and Wyandot counties.



Borealis Philanthropy

Support for impact litigation addressing systemic discrimination.

**City of Columbus Families
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Support for immigration legal services.



City of Dayton

Support for housing and community economic development.

Clark County Court of Common Pleas Domestic Relations Division Juvenile Section - Supreme Court of Ohio

Support for a community-based child abuse prevention program.

Clement O. Miniger Foundation

Support for the Toledo Medical-Legal Partnership for Children.

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Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Support for legal services for reentering citizens.



Dayton Children's Hospital Foundation

Support for the Dayton Medical-Legal Partnership for Children.

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Dayton Police Department

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Support for legal advocacy for mental health services consumers.

Miami Valley Community Action Partnership

Support for housing stabilization in Darke, Preble, Greene, Montgomery, and Warren counties.

Ohio Attorney General

Support for older adult survivors of domestic violence.

Ohio Department of Aging

Support for Ombudsman Program for seniors in long-term care facilities.

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Support for mental health services and stigma reduction COVID outreach

Ohio State Bar Foundation

Support for Know Your Rights videos and outreach.

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Support for eviction legal work in Dayton

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Toledo Community Foundation – ProMedica

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Support for the Immigration Advocacy Project.



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Support for legal housing assistance.

United Way of Greater Toledo

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U.S. Department of Justice

Support for the Dayton Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, victims of crime, and individuals affected by the opioid crisis.



Area Agency on Aging

Area Agency on Aging, PSA2

Support for legal assistance to seniors in Champaign, Clark, Darke, Green, Logan, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, and Shelby counties.

Area Agency on Aging, PSA3

Support for legal assistance to seniors in Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, and Van Wert counties.

Area Agency on Aging, PSA5

Support for legal assistance to seniors in Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, and Van Wert counties.



City of Toledo

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Federal Community Development Block Grant funds supporting legal assistance in housing matters for low-income City of Toledo residents.

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Great Lakes Community Action Partnership

Support for housing stabilization services in Wood, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Seneca counties.

Hancock-Hardin-Wyandot-Putnam Community Action Commission

Support for housing stabilization services in Hancock, Hardin, Wyandot, and Putnam counties.



Legal Services Corporation

Support for LAWO services in 32 northwest and west central Ohio counties, state-wide legal services for agricultural workers, and LAWO's Tornado Recovery Project.

Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Title XX funding for legal assistance to low-income individuals and families.

Miami County Department of Job and Family Services

Support for legal assistance to residents eligible for county assistance.

Montgomery County Board of County Commissioners

Support for legal services for the frail elderly, survivors of domestic violence, and people seeking employment.

Northwestern Ohio Community Action Commission

Support for housing stabilization services in Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Paulding, Van Wert, and Williams counties.

Ohio Access to Justice Foundation

Support for legal services for survivors in the Greater Lima area, individuals and families seeking assistance with the opioid crisis, veterans, and pro bono services in several rural counties.



Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center

Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center

Support for legal services for victims of domestic violence.

Ohio Attorney General Office

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Pathway, Inc.

Support for housing stabilization services in Lucas County.

Sandusky Municipal Court

Support for legal services in housing cases for low-income City of Sandusky residents.



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Support for legal services for residents of Clark County living on low income.

Toledo Community Foundation

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Toledo Municipal Court

Support for legal services for low-income City of Toledo residents in eviction and debt collection cases.

United Way of Defiance County

Support for legal assistance to low-income residents of Defiance County.

United Way of Fulton County

Support for legal assistance to low-income residents of Fulton County.

United Way of Greater Toledo

Support for legal services for low-income residents of Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties.

U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Support for a training and services grant to end violence against women with disabilities and support for the Justice for Families Program.

We appreciate the generosity of individuals who give to the **Justice for All Campaign**. Your donations make it possible for us to serve thousands of people needing legal help to protect their legal rights and achieve justice.



The Justice for All Campaign is a fundraising partnership among Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE), the Toledo Bar Association's Pro Bono Legal Services Program, and Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO). As the sole providers of free civil legal aid to people living in poverty in northwest Ohio, the Justice for All Campaign unites our fundraising efforts to ensure that vulnerable and disenfranchised members of our community have equal access to the legal system.

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The Access to Justice Committee Hosts Justice Straight Up!

This year's northwest Ohio Access to Justice event took a different form than in years past. Taking COVID-19 precautions, ABLE, LAWO, and the Toledo Bar Association's Pro Bono Legal Services Program hosted **Justice Straight Up!** on September 30, 2021, in lieu of our annual Access to Justice Awards Dinner. The more informal, laid-back setting at Toledo Spirits allowed guests to experience a much-needed happy hour celebration with the local legal community and social justice advocates after the pandemic had prevented us from gathering in person for a year and a half. Justice Straight Up! gave attendees a chance to mix and mingle, enjoy signature cocktails, eat delicious hors d'oeuvres, and support critical legal services and programs for people living in poverty in northwest Ohio. Between generous sponsorships, donations, and ticket purchases, the event raised over \$54,000 for our important legal aid and pro bono work.



Thanks to our generous sponsors and donors!

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We thank you for your support!

STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Local Legislation on Housing in Dayton & Toledo"

ABLE began collaborating with the community partners in the planning and advocating for Right to Counsel housing legislation in 2020. Our findings indicated that in eviction proceedings, landlords are represented by an attorney 75 percent of the time, while tenants have legal representation less than 2 percent of the time. To combat these numbers and level out the playing field, ABLE attorneys drafted an ordinance and worked alongside local politicians and fair housing groups to make additional recommendations, including \$250,000 in funding for Legal Aid of Western Ohio's (LAWO) eviction defense work in Toledo Municipal Court. In September 2021, Toledo City Council enacted the tenant Right to Counsel ordinance, making it the 14th jurisdiction in the U.S. to pass right to counsel legislation in housing matters. The ordinance guarantees counsel for all tenants in eviction proceedings if they are at 200% or below the federal poverty level.

ABLE also drafted legislation and advocated for the passage of "Pay to Stay" tenant protections in Yellow Springs, Dayton, and Toledo. ABLE was instrumental in the drafting and the passage of a Source of Income ordinances in both Toledo and Dayton, which protect tenants from being excluded from housing due to their source of income, e.g., Social Security Disability Income, housing subsidies, and other government benefits. All these tenant protection measures passed or became effective in 2021.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced in November of 2021 that it had selected ABLE as one of 10 legal services organizations nationwide to receive an inaugural grant from its new Eviction Protection Grant Program. The grant selection process was highly competitive, with over 100 applications submitted from across the country.

The \$1 million grant allowed ABLE to expand an eviction prevention program into rural areas of seven counties in western Ohio. The funding allows us to provide legal representation in eviction actions, advocate for tenant protections in local policies and programs, coordinate with rental assistance programs, and provide legal education and information for renters through a new hotline.

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STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"SAFE Project"

LAWO is better prepared to assist survivors of domestic violence living with disabilities in Lucas County thanks to a U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women grant. This year, LAWO partnered with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) and Bethany House to create the Safety and Accessibility for Everyone (SAFE) Program.

SAFE advocates conducted a needs assessment to gather information about the services our agencies provide and the barriers survivors face when requesting assistance. Staff, survivors, people with disabilities, and domestic violence advocates helped identify key issues to develop a strategic plan that will be implemented at all Toledo-area SAFE agencies in the next two years. Recommendations include revising accommodations policies to reflect current best practices; reviewing physical spaces to ensure that they are safe and accessible; and developing a lunch and learn curriculum to educate staff about the intersection of race and disability.

The facts regarding domestic violence are difficult to ignore. According to the Office on Women's Health, 1 in 4 women have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime. Additionally, women with disabilities are uniquely vulnerable to all forms of gender-based violence. They experience higher rates of victimization than women without disabilities and are less likely to receive the supportive services they need. In 2013, the rate of victimization against people with disabilities was at least double the rate for those without disabilities for every age group measured, except those aged 65 and older. Shelters and other systems-based supports are often physically or procedurally inaccessible. All too often they also lack culturally competent services, making it even more difficult for survivors of color to get help.

Eliminating service delivery barriers and creating greater accessibility to community resources for survivors with disabilities ensures a future of independence and security for those most affected by gender-based violence. The SAFE Program helps eligible survivors access the services they need. It demonstrates the very meaning of *"Access to Justice for All."*



2021 CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL JUSTICE DONORS

The Campaign for Equal Justice is a fundraising partnership among Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO), the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project (GDVLP), and Advocates for Basic Legal

Equality, Inc. (ABLE). We are grateful for the contributions made to the 2021 Campaign, which directly address the civil legal needs of low-income individuals living in Dayton and the surrounding regions. This year, we raised over \$179,000 to assist people living in poverty in our communities. The Campaign total is comprised of donations from legal professionals, community contributions, and patronage of the Access to Justice Awards Celebration! and Justice on Tap! You make it possible for our firms to serve people in need.

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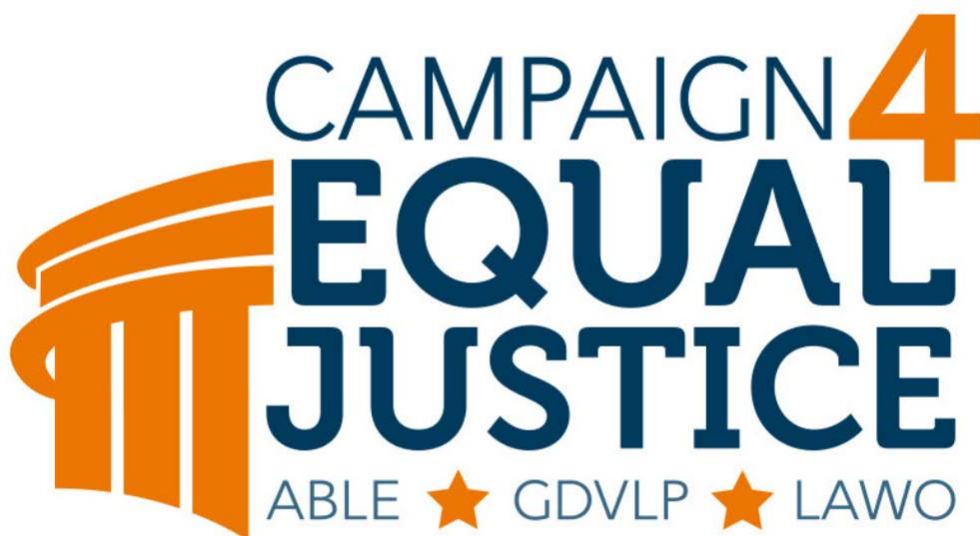
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2021 ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Awards Celebration

AWARDEES:



Jill Bucaro



Westminster
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Robert "Buzz"
Portune

The **2021 Access to Justice Awards Celebration!** was held on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at Sinclair Community College. The event was once again held in-person after the 2020 Access to Justice Awards was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Every year, Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE), the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project (GDVLP), and Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO) recognize three individuals and/or organizations who work endlessly to enable access to justice in the Dayton area community. Individuals and organizations are recognized for their hard work with three different awards: The Community Impact Award, the Patricia Rousseau Community Advocacy Award, and the Lloyd O'Hara Public Interest Award. This year, the **Hon. Judge Michael J. Newman** presented the awards to our worthy recipients.

Jill Bucaro of the Montgomery County Public Defender's Office received the **Community Impact Award** for her involvement in the criminal justice system and efforts to reduce recidivism rates through a holistic approach.

The Westminster Presbyterian Church ID Ministry was awarded the **Patricia Rousseau Community Advocacy Award** for its community-driven efforts to provide state-issued identification cards to residents.

Robert "Buzz" Portune of Gotslitsch & Portune received the **Lloyd O'Hara Public Interest Award** for his commitment to providing legal services to migrant workers and refugees on behalf of Catholic Social Services in the Miami Valley.

Sponsors and attendees helped raise \$5,000 in text-to-give during the event. We had many sponsors and attendees, which was a highlight considering it was our first major event since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

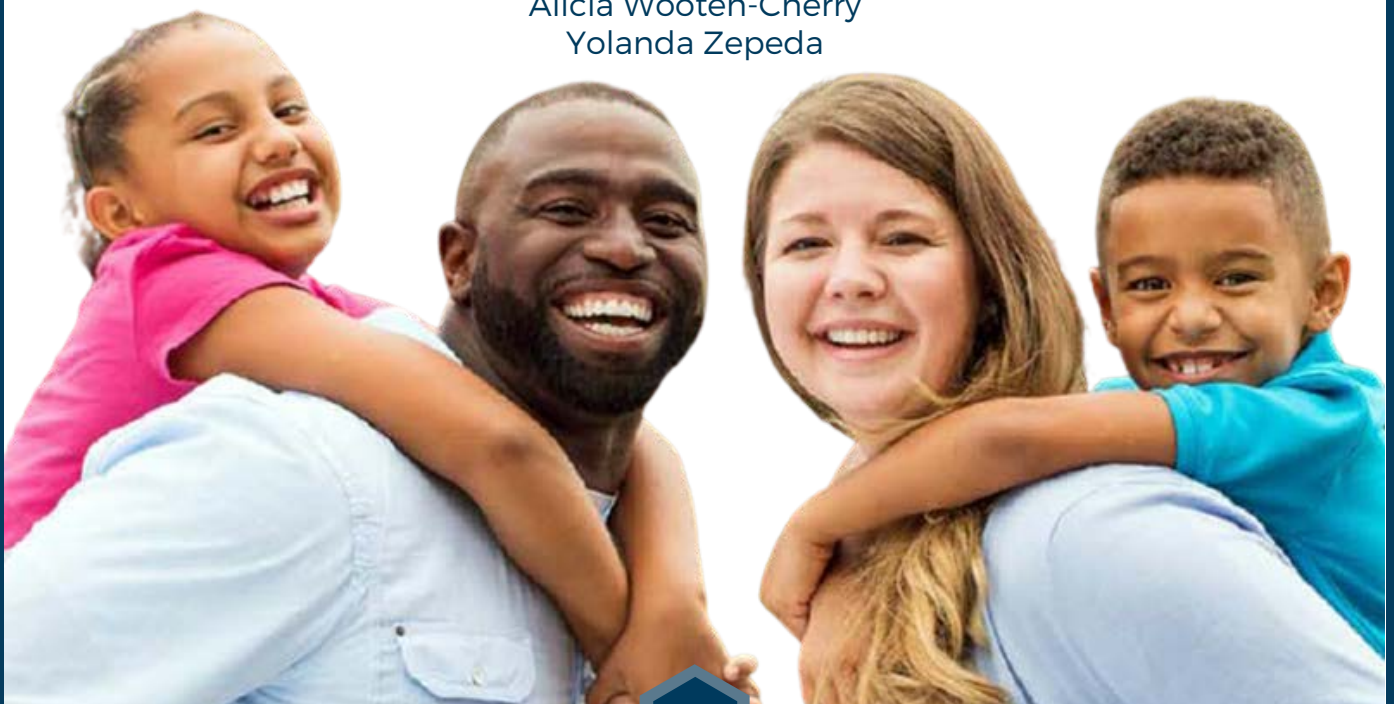
Immigration Advocacy Project



ABLE is at the forefront of protecting the legal rights of low-income immigrants and refugees as they attempt to lead safe and productive lives in our communities. Compassionate donors give to ensure that we continue to provide this important legal assistance, and for that we are grateful.

Thank you to the following individuals who contributed to the **ABLE Immigration Advocacy Project** in 2021:

Julie Higgins
Matthew Joseph
Richard & Shelley Kotz
Jaimee Ryan
John Schutze
Sarah Stafford
Daniel Tompkins
Alicia Wooten-Cherry
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