



2019 | 2020

**THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY OF  
ROCHESTER,  
NEW YORK**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

# DEAR FRIENDS

A MESSAGE FROM  
CARLA & KATHRYN

As we reflect on the past year, our hearts are filled with immense gratitude. Thanks to our generous supporters and funders, dedicated attorneys and support staff, and committed community partners, we continued to expand our programs and ensure more of our neighbors who seek justice have the opportunity to receive a fair and full hearing. From April 2019-March 2020, LASROC provided direct representation in over 8,000 cases and legal advice to more than 1,300 individuals.

We were able to add new attorneys and administrative support this year, growing our team by more than 15%. The LASROC team now includes 88 staff members. Additionally, we have been selected to participate in a longitudinal Department of Labor survey monitoring employment retention that will run through 2023.

Later in this report, we share more about the expansion of the Telesca Center for Justice, but we would be remiss if we didn't mention again how thankful we are to Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson for his support helping us obtain funding from the Dormitory Authority of the

State of New York to make some long-awaited improvements to the Telesca Center for Justice.

This past year, our Housing & Consumer Law Unit, together with the support of our Telesca Center for Justice Partners, celebrated a milestone win for Rochester tenants. The precedent established by this case will allow Rochester tenants access to bring an affirmative case to force landlords to provide a safe and healthy home.

We continue to be grateful for the collaborative efforts of our community partners. Together, we reach towards our vision of creating an environment in our community that values access to legal counsel, so every person is treated with dignity, equality, and fairness.

On behalf of the entire LASROC team, we thank you for being there with us and for your commitment to our mission.

Ps. Next year, 2021, marks the 100th year of LASROC's service to the greater Rochester community! We cordially invite you to celebrate with us! Please, be on the lookout for updates and sign up for our newsletter at [lasroc.org](http://lasroc.org).

# PROGRAM OVERVIEWS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2019 | 2020

OUR ATTORNEYS AND STAFF OBTAINED MORE THAN \$3.4 MILLION FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CLIENTS THROUGH CHILD SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE AWARDS, EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION, PREVENTING IMPROPER JUDGMENTS AND FORECLOSURES, AND ASSISTING WITH DEBT RELIEF.

## 4356

### ATTORNEY FOR THE CHILD

PROVIDED DIRECT  
REPRESENTATION IN **4356**  
CASES

Our Attorney for the Child Unit is appointed by the court to provide free legal representation to children in a variety of cases, including abuse, custody, foster care, juvenile delinquency, or Person in Need of Supervision (PINS). The wishes and feelings of the child are the primary concern of the Attorney for the Child.

## 1522

### HOUSING & CONSUMER LAW

PROVIDED DIRECT  
REPRESENTATION IN **1522**  
CASES

Our Housing and Consumer Law Unit provides a continuum of housing and transactional services, including eviction prevention, foreclosure prevention, bankruptcy, and consumer law, representation of first-time home buyers and wills, and advance directives for seniors and Homeowners.

## 327

### EDUCATIONAL LAW

PROVIDED DIRECT  
REPRESENTATION IN **327**  
CASES

The attorneys and advocates of our Education Law Unit support children from birth to 21 years old in Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, and Wayne Counties with legal representation and advocacy in education-related matters. This includes representation for Committees on Special Education (CSE), school suspensions, reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities, eligibility for school enrollment, enrollment for homeless students, and access to the appropriate school or community services.

## 1588

### FAMILY LAW

PROVIDED DIRECT  
REPRESENTATION IN **1588**  
CASES

Our Family Law Unit provides high-quality legal representation and advocacy to low-income residents of Genesee, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, and Wayne Counties. We strive to support survivors, end domestic violence, and reduce poverty among our clients through legal representation in divorce, custody, visitation, child support, and other family law matters. Our domestic violence legal services are provided in collaboration with Willow Domestic Violence Center and other domestic violence providers.

## 395

### IMMIGRATION LAW

PROVIDED DIRECT  
REPRESENTATION IN **395** CASES

Our Immigration Law Unit provides legal representation and technical assistance in immigration-related matters to persons residing in a 32-county area of western New York. Representation includes cases involving asylum, permanent residence, removal defense, meritorious appeals, extension of immigration status, and work authorization. Services also includes technical legal assistance on immigration law to indigent defenders representing individuals in criminal matters.



**CARLA M. PALUMBO** PRESIDENT AND CEO

*Carla M. Palumbo*



**KATHRYN L. SMITH** CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Kathryn L. Smith*



## LANDMARK WIN FOR ROCHESTER TENANTS



Photo: CITY Newspaper - Max Schulte

In the fall of 2019, The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY filed a case in the Rochester City Court on behalf of Linda Barger, a tenant seeking an order requiring her landlord to make much-needed repairs to her home. For years, the property was rife with hazardous and unsafe conditions, including rodent and bedbug infestations, sagging ceilings, torn up floors, and a crumbling porch, to name a few.

Facing the additional challenge of being unable to move to another home due to a severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, Ms. Barger continuously paid her full rent, yet her landlord refused to make any repairs or clear the numerous and significant property code violations. Ms. Barger was seeking a court order requiring the landlord to correct all conditions that threaten her health and safety. Rochester City Court maintained that it lacked the equity jurisdiction to grant affirmative relief of this nature, an issue we have advocated for with the courts alongside the community for several years.

Michael Furlano, the lead attorney in this case explained, "We brought this case under the Uniform City Court Act §203, believing that the statute provides the city court jurisdiction to hear cases brought by tenants seeking repairs of unsafe and hazardous living conditions." LASROC believes that under NYS Law a tenant has an affirmative right to sue their landlord and require repairs be made to conditions that threaten their health and safety. Furlano shares, "This is an important tool

for tenants renting from landlords who refuse to remedy hazardous and unsafe conditions."

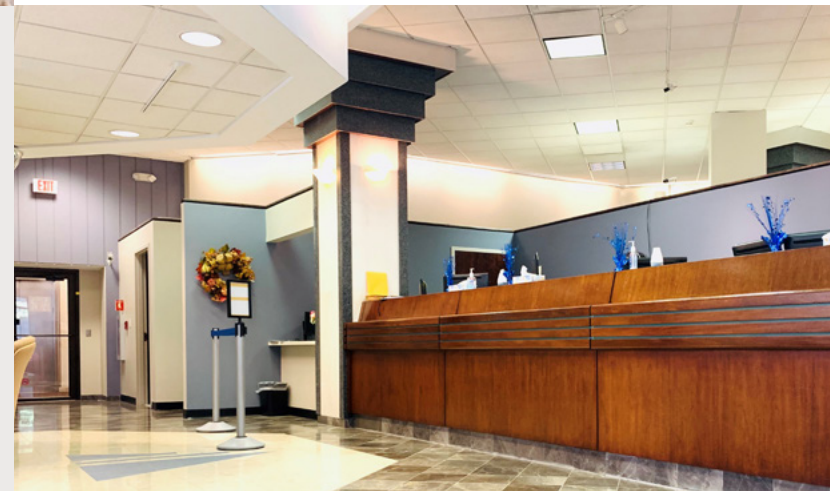
After months of presenting the law and the facts of the case to the Court, Judge Michael C. Lopez ruled in favor of Ms. Berger and ordered rental abatement for previous rent paid for \$4,800, awarded \$4500 in attorney fees, gave the landlord 60 days to make repairs, and ordered that no rent was due until repairs were made.

The precedent set by this case will make it possible for Rochester tenants to bring an affirmative case to force landlords to provide a safe and healthy home. "This case opens up an avenue of opportunities for our clients to attain better living conditions. It also demonstrates the hard work of not just the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, but all the organizations in the Telesca Center for Justice who worked on the idea of bringing an action like this, and work to help tenants have safe and healthy homes," said Zach Pike, LASROC's Civil Division Director.

LASROC believes those who seek justice have the right to receive a full and fair hearing and we are incredibly proud to be a part of this landmark decision. "At the end of the day, tenants just want to live in clean, safe, habitable housing, and there shouldn't be this struggle to obtain that," Furlano said.

Sadly, Ms. Barger passed away before the order expired, and we are engaged in ongoing litigation to secure the judgment for her estate.

## CAPACITY-INCREASING RENOVATIONS COMPLETED



The summer of 2019 saw the completion of a long-awaited and ambitious renovation project at the Telesca Center for Justice. Thanks to funding from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, secured with the support of Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson, LASROC was able to complete extensive renovations that breathe new life into the first floor of One West Main Street, positioning us to better meet the needs of our clients.

The renovation included expanding the Telesca Center Community Reception to create a large and inviting reception area, complete with a children's play space. Reception for all Telesca Center for Justice partners and intake for LASROC are now on the first floor, making visits to the building more welcoming and straightforward. (Previously, guests would need to go to the eighth floor to find reception.) Our welcoming reception team can greet clients immediately and direct them to appropriate services. People often seek assistance from LASROC, and our Telesca Center partners, during critical times in their lives and this much-needed reception renovation provides a comfortable and more relaxed space to begin their path forward.

The renovation also added offices for staff and created space for collaboration through the addition of multiple meeting spaces. Before the renovations, many of our staff shared office spaces. Our attorneys and advocates have benefited from the increased privacy for client meetings that the additional meeting space has provided.

We are extremely proud of this project and excited to have a more welcoming space to greet our clients in. The new space has significantly improved our clients' experience at the Telesca Center for Justice and has created space for our ever-growing team. LASROC is, as always, at the ready to meet expanding community needs and continues to provide the highest quality legal services for our clients in our new inviting space at One West Main Street!



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS LEADERSHIP

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Kristen Porpora, Esq. – Program Director, Family Law Unit  
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Stephanie Wolter, Esq. – Supervising Attorney, Family Law Unit  
Katie Woodruff, Esq. – Youth Justice Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2019 | 2020

## OPERATING REVENUE

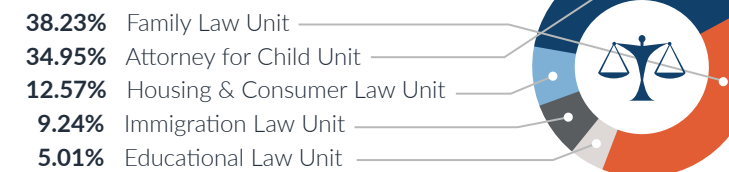
NYS Government Grants (OCA,OAG, OILS, ONA, OVS, DOH, DCJS)	\$5,131,597.00
New York State Interest on Lawyer's Accounts	\$800,000.00
Federal Grants (USDOJ, HUD)	\$502,921.00
Fundraising & Miscellaneous Revenue	\$307,353.00
United Way of Greater Rochester, Monroe and Livingston Counties	\$285,264.00
Monroe County, City of Rochester	\$142,219.00
Case Fees	\$102,351.00
Foundations	\$50,400.00
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$7,322,105.00</b>

## Program Services

Family Law Unit	\$2,382,886.00
Attorney for Child Unit	\$2,314,844.00
Housing & Consumer Law Unit	\$731,184.00
Immigration Law Unit	\$664,137.00
Education Law Unit	\$287,579.00
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>\$6,380,630.00</b>
<b>Management &amp; General Expenses</b>	<b>\$940,162.00</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,320,792.00</b>
Excess/(Deficiency) of Operating Revenue over Expenses	\$1,313.00

## OPERATING EXPENSES

## NATURE OF OUR PROGRAMS



## HOW WE USE OUR FUNDS

Program \$6,380,630 - 85.27%



Administration \$940,162 - 14.73%



Administrative Salaries - \$530,847

Professional Salaries - \$4,144,145

Total Functional Expenses - \$7,320,792

Total Revenue - \$7,322,105

Comparison of Total Revenue, Total Functional Expenses, Professional Salaries and Administrative Salaries

THESE FIGURES ARE PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO AUDIT.  
FINANCIAL RECORDS ARE AUDITED BY RDG + PARTNERS ACCOUNTING AND CPA SERVICES.

## MISSION

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY is a not-for-profit organization that provides direct civil legal services, including lay advocacy and related human services, to adults and children. We ensure that those who seek justice have an opportunity to receive a fair and full hearing. We obtain legal solutions that have a beneficial impact on our clients and the community.

## VISION

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY believes in the guarantees of due process and equal protection as promised in our State and Federal constitutions.

To ensure that these rights have real meaning, we will strive to provide a highly qualified and zealous advocate to anyone who cannot otherwise obtain representation in civil legal matters.

We will create an environment in our community that values access to legal counsel, so every person is treated with dignity, equality, and fairness.



The Legal Aid Society  
of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK