



GROWING **JUSTICE**

GROWING HOPE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Justice for all, one case at a time.

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2025 we continued the critical day-to-day work representing clients with civil legal problems that threatened their housing, safety, health, education, and economic security. We also began implementing our new three-year strategic plan for legal advocacy to address larger systemic issues and to develop systems to provide high-quality legal services to more clients more efficiently. You'll find more on the plan and our first year of work on it in the following pages.

And while we are fortunate at Community Legal Aid to have an amazingly talented team of attorneys and paraprofessionals, we also have an amazingly talented team of pro bono attorneys who volunteer their time to serve our clients. All of our pro bono attorneys, whether they are solo practitioners, work in small or big firms, or come from corporate legal departments such as Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and FirstEnergy, share something in common: a commitment to the principle that every person, regardless of their ability to pay, deserves access to justice.

We have many stories to share from the past year, stories of hope and resilience in the face of dire circumstances. Stories of protecting families from eviction. Stories of domestic violence survivors feeling safe for the first time in years. Stories of veterans who fell on hard times getting the support they earned. So many stories of our neighbors overcoming any number of legal issues because they had access to an attorney.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our work. Thank you for being part of our team as we continue to grow justice — one case at a time.



Steven J. McGarrity, Esq.
Executive Director



Christopher T. Teodosio, Esq.
Board President

Our Work: Rooted in Justice

Shannon is back on the job thanks to Community Legal Aid's help

Shannon was thrilled to get a stable job with better pay at a nearby hospital. However, after six weeks on the job, the hospital received her background check, and it revealed that she had two criminal charges on her record.

"They called me up and fired me on the spot," Shannon said. "I had to leave immediately. I was devastated."

Fortunately, someone in human resources told her that Community Legal Aid might be able to help Shannon get her record expunged.

"I asked her, if I get this expunged, can I get my job back? And she said, 'Absolutely,'" Shannon recalled. "Then Legal Aid stepped up and helped me right away with the process."

Shannon worked with Staff Attorney Josh Hinkel.

"Josh was amazing," she said. "First of all, I was a nervous wreck because I needed to get back to work. I don't like the court system. It makes me anxious and upset. Once I got that call from Josh, it lifted so much weight off my shoulders, and I knew everything would be OK. He prepared me for court, then it was over, and we were done."



"I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to come alongside Shannon and help her clear her record. Stories like Shannon's are why Community Legal Aid's Assisting Reentering Citizens Project exists. We are here to help individuals get back on the right track."

— Staff Attorney Josh Hinkel

A couple of weeks later, Shannon got her expungement paperwork back from the court and brought it to the hospital, which paved the way for her to return to her job there.

"It's wonderful," she said. "It's nice to get my life back in order."

"A criminal record, no matter how low-level the offense may be, can significantly change the direction of a person's life," Attorney Hinkel said. "A record can prevent a promotion, or, in the case of Shannon, prevent them from being employed. It can be stressful for these individuals when changing jobs because it is at the discretion of the employer whether they are hired or not. Even though the person may have had no issue working for one employer for years, another employer in the same industry may decide they cannot hire them due to their record."

TJ is now a father with a future

TJ loved being a father. But when he and his child's mother split up, it sent him into a tailspin.

A stay in jail for several months provided TJ with the clarity to see that he needed to change his life. He successfully worked on his sobriety and dedicated himself to improving his situation, with a goal of reestablishing a relationship with his daughter.

His parents told him about Community Legal Aid, so TJ came to us for help with creating a parenting plan so he could be the father he always wanted to be. Staff Attorney Allie Johnston helped TJ successfully find a new path toward being the father he knew he could be.



TJ with Staff Attorney Allie Johnston

To hear TJ tell his story, scan the QR code for a short video.



Planting seeds, meeting the need

Strategic priorities guide our work

In 2025, Community Legal Aid's Board adopted Strategic Advocacy Priorities to guide our impact work for the next three years. Read more about our efforts toward one of these priorities, the right to counsel in evictions, below. To see all of our Strategic Advocacy Priorities, scan the QR code or go to communitylegalaid.org/our-work.



Right to Counsel in Evictions helping neighborhoods in Akron

In 2025, in partnership with the City of Akron and United Way of Summit and Medina Counties, Community Legal Aid launched the Right to Counsel in Evictions Pilot. This innovative three-year pilot project gives eligible Akron residents attorney representation in eviction proceedings at Akron Municipal Court.

In a court system designed to have lawyers representing both sides of a dispute and where almost all landlords have an attorney representing them, a tenant facing eviction without an attorney has little hope of presenting a good defense or working out a reasonable settlement.

For many years, Akron has had the highest per capita eviction rate of any Ohio city. In 2022, Community Legal Aid and Fair Housing Contact Service convened the Eviction Prevention Summit. This event brought together hundreds of judges, court personnel, tenants, housing providers, attorneys, nonprofit agencies, local government officials, and more to reflect on the causes of the city's high eviction rate and develop solutions.

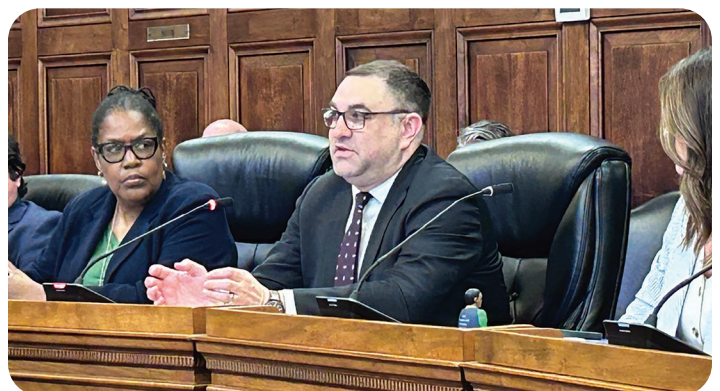
The top recommended solution of Eviction Prevention Summit participants was right to counsel in evictions. Just as criminal defendants have a right to an attorney when facing a loss of liberty, low-income tenants facing a loss of housing should have a right to an attorney in eviction proceedings. In 2025, the Community Legal Aid Board adopted the establishment of a right to counsel in evictions in at least one jurisdiction as a strategic advocacy priority for the organization.

Under Akron Mayor Shammias Malik's leadership, the Right to Counsel Pilot Project was funded for three years by Akron City Council in the summer of 2025.

Under the pilot project, families with children at or below the poverty level and disabled older adults at or below the poverty line are eligible to have attorney representation.

In the first few months of the pilot project, 83% of assisted tenants achieved a positive outcome in their eviction case.

"Right to Counsel has been a proven success throughout the U.S., and we applaud the city of Akron for moving forward with us on this effort," said Steven McGarrity, executive director of Community Legal Aid. "Our team is hard at work on the pilot, and we look forward to seeing the impact we can have in the next three years."



Director of Client Services Ken Mirkin speaks to Akron City Council about our Right to Counsel Project

2025 By the Numbers

OVERVIEW

4,988
cases handled

10,309
individuals helped

15,340
intake applications

\$6.94M
in economic impact
(dollars earned or
saved for clients)

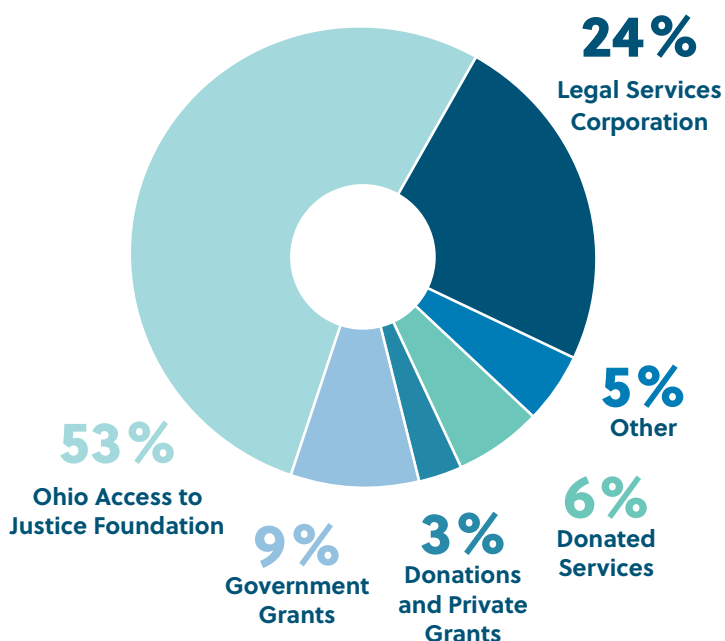
52%
of households
helped included
children

64%
of households
served make less
than \$25,000
per year

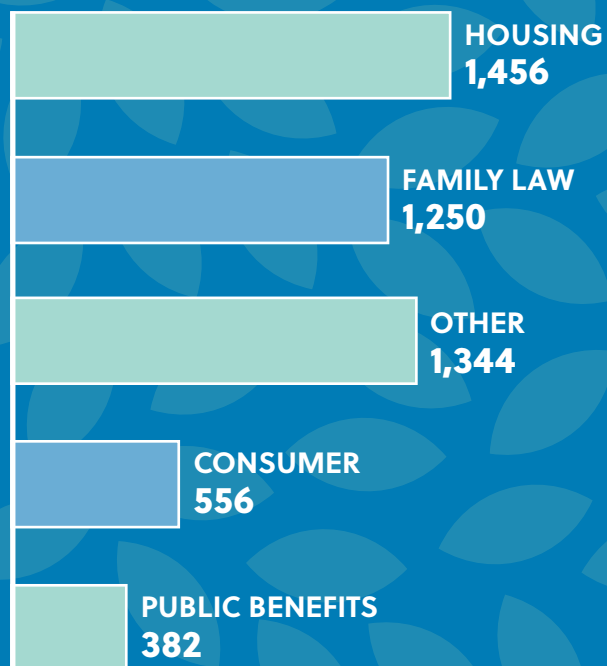
33%
of households
helped included
seniors or people
with disabilities

2025 REVENUE CHART

Total support and revenue:
\$12.5 million



CASE BREAKDOWN



Pro Bono Project cultivates support of legal partners

In 2025, our Volunteer Legal Services program was renamed the Pro Bono Project to better align with its goals of providing pro bono opportunities to attorneys and other legal professionals in our communities.



109

Pro Bono Attorneys



3,349

Pro Bono Hours



1,149

cases handled



84%

**Positive Outcomes
for our clients**

Congratulations to our 2025 Pro Bono Project Attorneys of the Year!



**Attorney
Frederick "Fritz"
Coombs**
Mahoning County



**Attorney
Nancy Yakubek**
Trumbull County



**Maguire
Schneckenberger**
Legal Group
Summit County



**Attorney
Caitlyn Benzo**
Stark County



**Attorney
Nicole L. Rohr-Metzger**
Stark County



**Attorney
Timothy R. Thomas**
Portage County

Pro Bono Project Attorneys

*Thank you to the Pro Bono Project attorneys who took at least one case in 2025.
Your time and talents helped hundreds of people in your communities!*

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Brian J. Knipe
Todd M. Kolarik
Oliver T. Koo
Michael P. Koslen
Shawna L. L'Italien
Vincent W. LaGuardia
Christopher J. Lalak
Elliot P. Legow
Daniel B. Letson
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Lamprini G. Mathews
Michael O. McGinty
Ellen K. Meehan
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The need for legal services for low-income people is great, and we are always in need of more pro bono attorneys.
For more information or to sign up, go to: communitylegalaid.org/probonoproject or call 330-983-2568.

Acknowledgments

Our work is only possible thanks to the hard work, dedication and contributions of those individuals and organizations listed below and on the following pages. Thank you to all of our supporters for being part of our mission!

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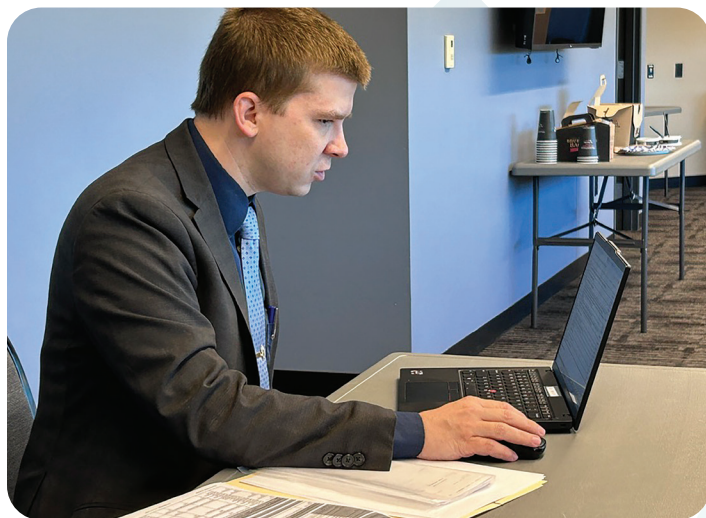
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Direction Home of Eastern Ohio (Area Agency on Aging)
Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust
Domestic Violence Project
Internal Revenue Service
Office of Criminal Justice Services
Ohio Attorney General
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Ohio Department of Medicaid
Ohio Housing Finance Agency
Portage County Job and Family Services
Stark County Department of Job and Family Services
Stark County Family Court
Stark Court of Common Pleas
Summa Family Medicine Center
Summit County Department of Job and Family Services
Summit County Public Health
Trumbull County Commissioners
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women
Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging



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LEGAL AID

Community Legal Aid
50 S. Main St., Suite 800
Akron, Ohio 44308

GROWING JUSTICE

GROWING HOPE

Our Mission

Through legal advocacy, we transform the lives of those in poverty to increase opportunities, fairness, and stability, for a stronger community and justice for all.

Our Vision

We believe that all individuals, including those who are impoverished, should have the opportunity to control, improve, and enrich their lives and community.

www.communitylegalaid.org

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