

friends & colleagues,

It has and continues to be a strange and somewhat stilted environment in which we live and practice. Few would have thought we would still be dealing with the impact of COVID-19 in our community well over a year and half later. While it is certainly easy to be disheartened by the last few months, I am reminded by the sentiments of former President John Kennedy when he opined as a young senator that “We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes.” Thus, it is with hope and a spirit of thanksgiving that I write to you today as we begin this year’s Access to Justice Campaign.

Even before the advent of COVID-19 in our community, our justice system has long been rife with inequities that challenge the 70% of low-income families that face civil legal issue each year. For those individuals that live on the socioeconomic margins, their safety, security, and stability have been at even greater risk during the pandemic. Moreover, a new population of those in need of legal assistance grew when families faced increased unemployment, health care and housing instability because of the impact of COVID-19.

As you will see on the following pages, the tumultuous and uncertain nature of the past 18 months has made it clear that our neighbors need organizations like Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Legal Aid of North Carolina-Charlotte now more than ever. But it was your continued support to the Access to Justice Campaign that made it possible to respond to our community’s evolving needs.

A recent assessment of civil legal needs in North Carolina proved this work is not finished. Without sufficient funding, the assessment found that 86% of civil legal needs in North Carolina will go unmet. I see this discouraging statistic as a call to action for those reading this note who can make a difference. Your commitment to the Access to Justice Campaign ensures legal staff will be ready when one of our neighbors face civil legal issues. It inspires me to contribute to and lead the campaign this year. As we found hope in the face of the pandemic, so too can we find hope in bridging the justice gap for those in need. Please help me bring that hope to our neighbors.

MECKLENBURG ACCESS TO JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

[Bridging the Gap]



Heath Gilbert,
2021-2022 Access to
Justice Campaign Chair

[your **SUPPORT**]

made it possible

Your support made it possible for **Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Legal Aid of North Carolina-Charlotte** to respond to the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 in our community.

When countless neighbors lost their jobs or faced uncertain employment...

538 clients assisted navigating unemployment insurance, stimulus checks, and tax changes

When individuals' health care options were uncertain...

2,010 clients accessed Medicaid or Affordable Care Act health coverage options with the aid of health insurance Navigators

When there was a sharp increase in domestic violence incidents...

435 clients sought protective orders and intervention while our courts were operating on a limited capacity

When our neighbors fell behind on rent and mortgages and federal moratoria changes created uncertainty...

1,383 clients protected from illegal evictions and foreclosures and remained safely housed

7,648 neighbors aided by **Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Legal Aid of North Carolina-Charlotte** last year.

"The reality is that justice today depends on one's ability to obtain accurate and sound legal advice. If I know that's needed, and I know it's not happening, it seems to me I have an obligation to look for a solution. I can't change everything wrong with society. But I can support justice for **ALL**."

- Bob Penny,
longtime ATJ sustainer

Join our movement to build a more just community. Support the **Access to Justice Campaign!**

i support
justice
for **ALL**



Donate online at **bit.ly/ATJCLT**
Gifts of \$1,000+ made by Nov. 29 will be recognized during **#GivingTuesdayCLT!**

[Bridging the Gap]

demanding equity and equal access to justice

protecting the right to safety, security and stability



Fighting for patients like Charlotte ... Diagnosed with breast cancer at 28, Charlotte's doctor's first question was how she planned to pay for her treatment. Facing repeated denials from the Department of Social Services, the Advocacy Center ensured Charlotte received coverage through the Breast & Cervical Cancer Medicaid program. Relieved from the financial stress of how to pay for her cancer treatment, Charlotte was able to focus on what was most important: her health and her son.



Fighting for the most vulnerable ... While many experienced higher levels of anxiety and stress due to the pandemic, nothing compared to the life-threatening existence in which domestic violence victims found themselves. Legal Aid of North Carolina and the Advocacy Center were instrumental in shielding those already vulnerable to dangerous home environments by seeking protective orders and legal intervention, particularly when our courts were operating at a limited capacity.

Fighting for equal access ... Families desperate for financial support needed to be sure they received federally issued stimulus checks and unemployment benefits. Who was eligible? What if payments didn't arrive? Can they appeal? Legal Aid of North Carolina and the Advocacy Center answered these questions and more for our clients and the community to ensure everyone eligible received them.



Fighting for young people like Tahla ... The son of a political prisoner, Tahla fled his home country of Turkey at the age of 17 to change his future. The Advocacy Center worked tirelessly to get Tahla first Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and ultimately, his Green Card. As a result, Tahla was able to enroll in college to pursue his dream of becoming an engineer.



Fighting for Veterans like Rocky ... Rocky spent his early adulthood proudly serving our country as a member of the Air Force, but the physical toll of his military service followed him into older age. He turned to the Advocacy Center for help navigating the complex claim procedures and now has access to backpay and disability benefits that provide lasting economic stability for he and his family.



Fighting for housing stability ... Our neighbors struggled to pay rent or were in danger of losing their homes due to COVID related economic instability. Legal Aid of North Carolina and the Advocacy Center stepped in to defend vulnerable neighbors by preventing eviction and foreclosure, as well as educating community members on the limits of federal moratorium protections.

MECKLENBURG ACCESS TO JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

[the need is everywhere.
that's why we're here.]

that's why we need you

A 2020 civil legal needs assesment found that more than **70% of low-income families have at least one civil legal issue each year** but are often left to navigate legal systems without the guidance of a lawyer. With **15% of our neighbors in North Carolina living in poverty**, inability to afford private lawyers is a reality. The inequity is more apparent when race and ethnicity are taken into account. Over **half of Charlotte's African American and Hispanic neighbors are asset poor and in need of legal services**. By supporting communities impacted by racial inequity and poverty, Charlotte Legal Advocacy Center and Legal Aid North Carolina-Charlotte addresses the need for long-term social change.

4,790

CLIENTS ASSISTED
NAVIGATING SYSTEMIC
BIASES TO ACCESS
AFFORDABLE HEALTH
CARE &
PUBLIC BENEFITS

844

IMMIGRANTS PROVIDED
ECONOMIC STABILITY
THROUGH PUBLIC
BENEFIT, HOUSING,
& HEALTH CARE
ASSISTANCE

278

CLIENTS PROVIDED
STABLE IMMIGRATION
STATUS

The connection between poverty and inequity is irrefutable. Your support means our organizations can address the injustices in the civil legal system, being a champion for immigrant and nonimmigrant neighbors of color.

259

CLIENTS OBTAINED DRIVERS'
LICENSE RESTORATION
OR RECORD EXPUNCTION,
REMOVING BARRIERS TO
PARTICIPATE IN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

415

FAMILIES PRESERVED
GENERATIONAL WEALTH
BY FIGHTING UNLAWFUL
FORECLOSURES, PREDATORY
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT,
AND ABUSIVE COLLECTION
PRACTICES

The work is not finished. Without sufficient funding, **86% of civil legal needs in North Carolina will go unmet.**

SUPPORT THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

MECKLENBURG ACCESS TO JUSTICE CHAMPIONS



**charlotte center
for legal advocacy**

justice lives here.



Together, we can bridge the gap.



Financial information about Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Legal Aid of North Carolina and copies of their licenses are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at (888) 830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state.