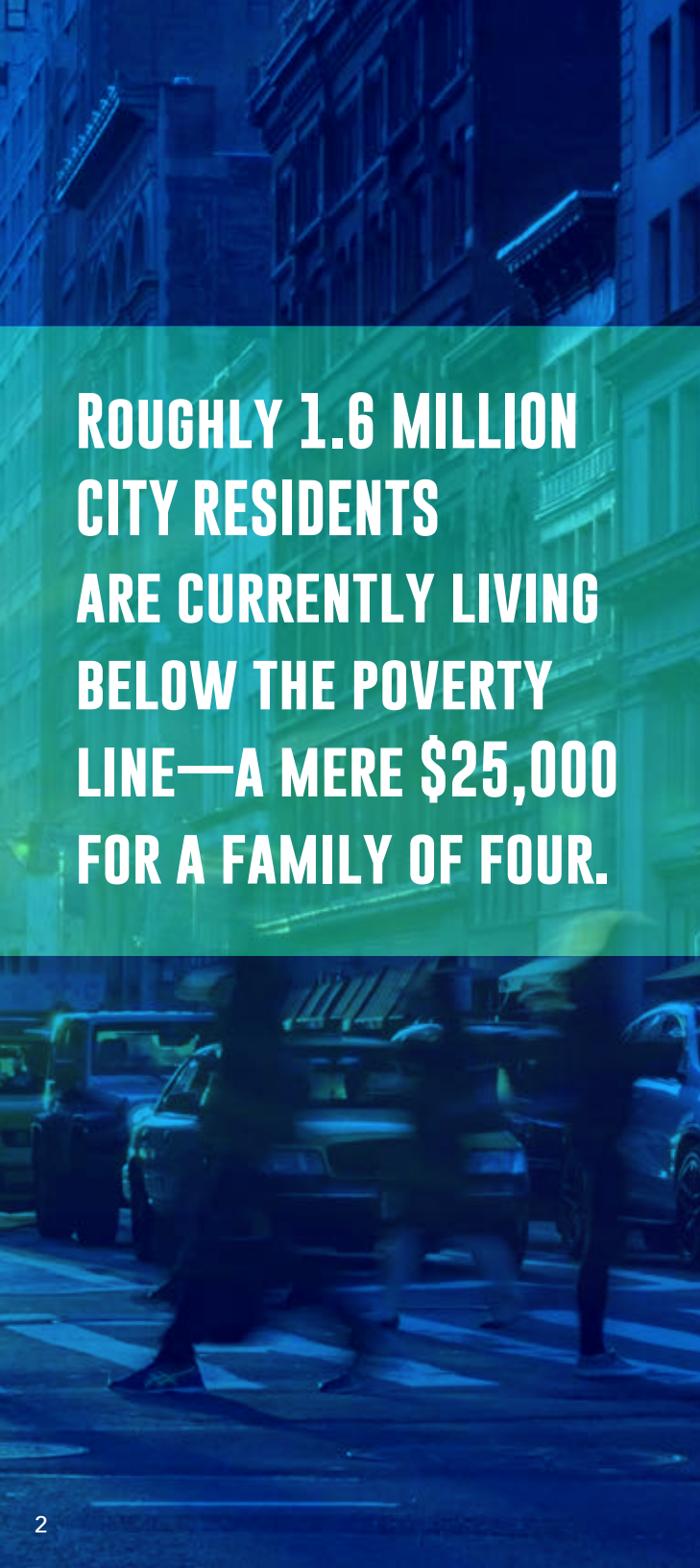


# FIGHTING SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE

**LEGAL SERVICES NYC 2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



**ROUGHLY 1.6 MILLION  
CITY RESIDENTS  
ARE CURRENTLY LIVING  
BELOW THE POVERTY  
LINE—A MERE \$25,000  
FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR.**

# LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Legal Services NYC was founded in 1968 as part of the War on Poverty. What started as a loose confederation of neighborhood-based legal services programs has grown into **THE NATION'S LARGEST CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDER**. Our citywide force of nearly 600 staff helps more than 115,000 low-income New Yorkers annually.

**FOR LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS FACING A LIFE CRISIS, LEGAL HELP IS OFTEN THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL IN RESOLVING IT.** Roughly 1.6 million city residents are currently living below the poverty line—a mere \$25,000 for a family of four. They are often made more vulnerable by discrimination, immigration status, age, or disabilities.

**FOR THE LAST 50 YEARS,** our dedicated staff has challenged systemic injustices and made

real, tangible improvements in the lives of communities across the city. This work includes preventing evictions and preserving housing; demanding access to high-quality education, health care, and economic security; ensuring safety and stability for survivors of domestic violence and immigrants; and fighting for the dignity and respect of all New Yorkers, including LGBTQ communities, New Yorkers with disabilities, and people of color.

**WITH DEEP ROOTS IN COMMUNITIES IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHS, LEGAL SERVICES NYC HAS HANDLED MORE THAN TWO MILLION CASES SINCE OUR FOUNDING.** We are proud of what we have accomplished and look forward to continuing to expand the scope of our work with the generous support of our partners and communities across the city.

# A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## DEAR SUPPORTERS,

I could not be more proud when I look at all that Legal Services NYC's dedicated staff have accomplished in FY2019. With systems and institutions increasingly stacked against low-income people in almost every way, Legal Services NYC's nearly 600 staff were able to find a way to make sure that a record 115,000 New Yorkers were able to access the services and resources they needed to survive. From preventing evictions and foreclosures and ensuring access to benefits for people with disabilities, veterans, and the elderly, to putting immigrants on a path to citizenship, helping students with disabilities get an education, and protecting the rights of LGBTQ individuals. Our staff is there every step of the way in advocating for our clients.

In addition to providing high-quality legal help to our clients, Legal Services NYC's staff also fought hard to change systems and institutions to better serve our clients over time. In 2019, Legal Services NYC **FORCED THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE LANGUAGE ON HOW TO DISCHARGE STUDENT LOAN DEBT** in its notices to borrowers, a change that will help thousands of low-income borrowers discharge their debt and hold onto desperately

needed benefits. Our advocates also **WON A CASE AGAINST UBER, FINALLY REQUIRING THEM TO RECOGNIZE THEIR DRIVERS AS EMPLOYEES** for the benefit of unemployment insurance, a change that will help keep thousands of drivers afloat should they lose their jobs. Legal Services NYC, along with other partners, successfully pushed the Office of Court Administration to issue a new rule **PROHIBITING ICE FROM ARRESTING INDIVIDUALS IN STATE COURTHOUSES**, a move that will allow countless immigrants to access justice. Our education advocates also **SUED THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR ITS FAILURE TO ADDRESS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS**, forcing the DOE to take a hard look at the way it handles these cases.

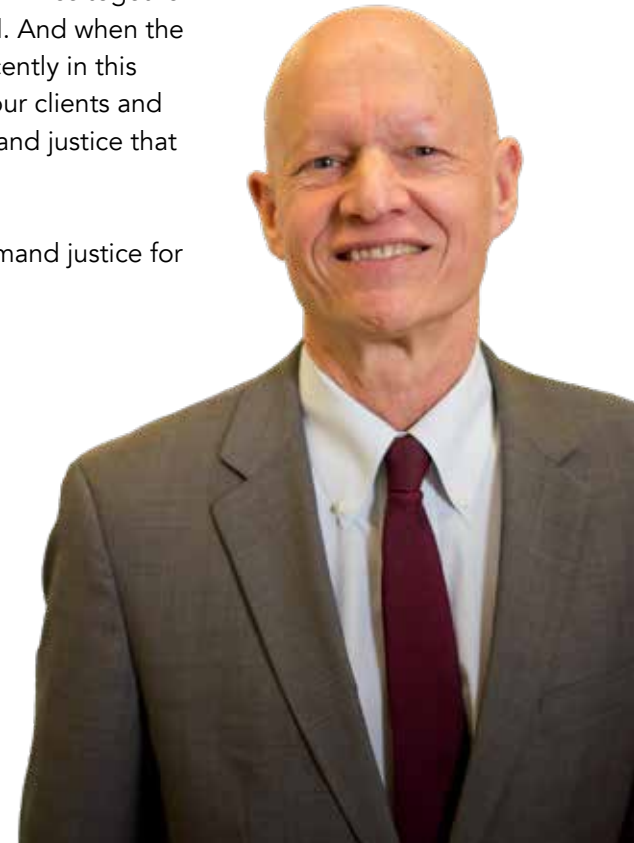
Our staff helps our clients hold their lives together in all these ways that are so critical. And when the stakes get higher, as they have recently in this country, we fight even harder for our clients and their families, and for the fairness and justice that are fundamental to our country.

Thank you all for helping us to demand justice for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

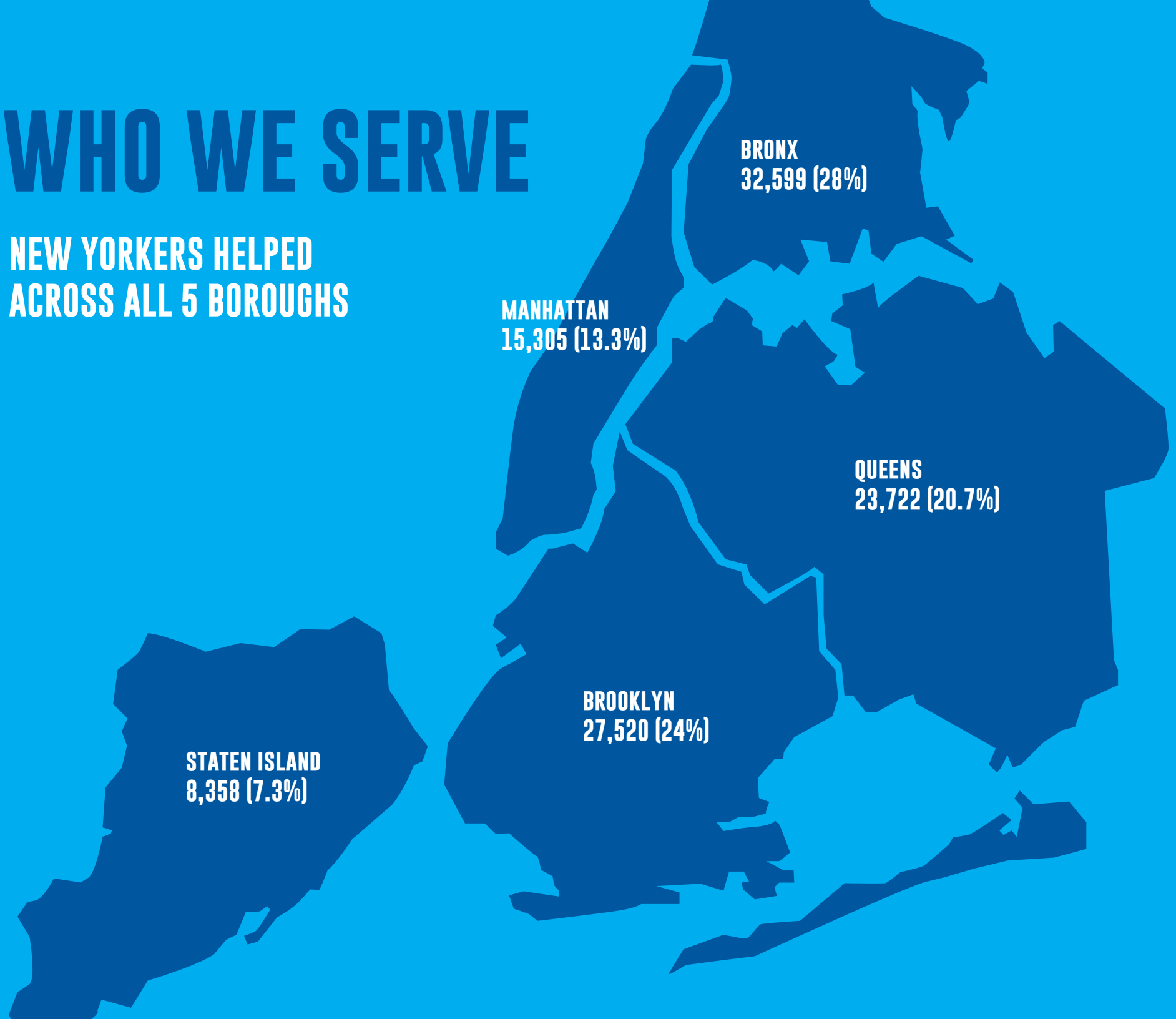


Raun J. Rasmussen  
Executive Director



# WHO WE SERVE

## NEW YORKERS HELPED ACROSS ALL 5 BOROUGHES



# WHAT WE DO

Through offices in all five boroughs, Legal Services NYC fights for the rights of the low-income members of our communities. We coordinate our services across practice areas to address the legal problems faced by historically low-income and persecuted populations, including immigrants, veterans, LGBTQ individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, and people with disabilities. Our multifaceted work to help people meet basic needs includes:

## PROTECTING HOUSING & PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

### 57,000 NEW YORKERS HELPED

Legal Services NYC prevents thousands of evictions and foreclosures every year. We force landlords to repair unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions. Our advocacy preserves affordable housing and prevents the displacement of poor families caused by gentrification.

## SAFEGUARDING INCOME & FIGHTING CONSUMER FRAUD

### 27,000 NEW YORKERS HELPED

We ensure access to public benefits for people with disabilities, veterans, the elderly, and others. We put a stop to employer practices that deprive workers of compensation, and fraudsters' schemes that often target low-income minorities and make sure New Yorkers have access to unemployment benefits.

## HELPING IMMIGRANTS & STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

### 25,000 NEW YORKERS HELPED

We help thousands of immigrants and their families gain asylum and get on a path to citizenship each year. Our attorneys and social workers also secure safe and stable environments for victims of domestic violence and their children.

## SECURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION & HEALTH CARE

### 4,000 NEW YORKERS HELPED

Our work to protect students' rights includes stopping inappropriate school discipline and making sure students with disabilities get the educational supports and services they need. Legal Services NYC helps uninsured New Yorkers access public health benefits, and safeguards patients' housing, finances, and health care coverage.

# BY THE NUMBERS



**600 STAFF MEMBERS** served approximately 115,000 low-income New Yorkers and 50,000 cases



**\$53,500,000** in cash benefits, settlements, and savings to our clients



**\$166,800,000** in NYC taxpayer savings



**3,000 VOLUNTEERS** at scores of law firms and companies donated more than 69,000 pro bono hours helping 8,900 New Yorkers.



**56,200 NEW YORKERS** who now understand their rights through trainings, workshops and community educational events



**19,400 HOTLINE CALLS** answered by staff fluent in 10 languages



# FORCING UBER TO PAY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS ON BEHALF OF DRIVERS

**UBER MUST NOW MAKE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PAYMENTS ON BEHALF OF ITS DRIVERS IN NEW YORK STATE THANKS TO A DECISION BY THE NEW YORK UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEAL BOARD RESULTING FROM A LAWSUIT FILED BY LEGAL SERVICES NYC AND THE NEW YORK TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE.**

The decision will help thousands of drivers in the state get the benefits they need if they find themselves out of a job. Legal Services NYC sued the NYS Department of Labor in 2016 for its failure to investigate drivers' unemployment claims. After the lawsuit filing, the department found drivers to be employees for the purposes of unemployment benefits and began processing their claims. Uber appealed the department's finding to the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board, which agreed with the department. Uber then appealed to the New York State Supreme Court's Appellate Division but withdrew the appeal at the 11th hour, making the board's decision the law of the land in New York State.



# ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN NYC SCHOOLS

**THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE) ISSUED NEW REGULATIONS ON HOW SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT STUDENTS WHO REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT FOLLOWING A LAWSUIT FROM LEGAL SERVICES NYC.**

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of several students, alleges that school personnel knew of the sexual assaults yet failed to conduct investigations, notify parents, offer interim safety measures, or assist with safety transfers. The complaint also alleged that the DOE was aware that students were suffering from trauma-related mental, behavioral, and emotional challenges resulting from the sexual assaults and harassment, yet ignored their legally mandated obligations to conduct evaluations of students and failed to provide support or accommodations to help students make progress toward their education.

Legal Services NYC is currently in settlement discussions with the DOE and is pushing for even stronger policy changes to better support survivors of school-based sexual violence and students with trauma-related disabilities.

**WE FIGHT FOR SURVIVORS  
OF SCHOOL-BASED SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE AND STUDENTS  
WITH TRAUMA-RELATED  
DISABILITIES**

# KEEPING NEW YORKERS IN THEIR HOMES

**MS. S, 89, RECEIVES SENIOR CITIZEN RENT INCREASE EXEMPTION (SCRIE)  
WHICH FREEZES HER RENT AT AN AFFORDABLE LEVEL**

But after she was briefly hospitalized in 2017 due to a fall, she was unable to recertify for SCRIE and therefore unable to pay her full rent. Her landlord moved to evict her. Legal Services NYC intervened and got her SCRIE recertified and set at the correct amount retroactively so the landlord could be paid back rent. Legal Services NYC settled the eviction case, getting Ms. S a credit towards her next rent payment. Ms. S is safely living in her rent-stabilized Brooklyn home where she has lived for the last 44 years.

# KEEPING FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY OUT OF RESIDENTIAL SPACES

**LEGAL SERVICES NYC'S BROOKLYN TENANT RIGHTS COALITION WORKED WITH  
TENANTS AT ATLANTIC PLAZA TOWERS IN BROWNSVILLE, BROOKLYN TO  
SUCCESSFULLY STOP THEIR LANDLORD FROM INSTALLING A FACIAL RECOGNITION  
ENTRY SYSTEM IN THEIR BUILDING.**

Tenants were concerned about their privacy rights and biometric data and reached out to the Coalition for help. After the Coalition helped them organize, tenants then advocated for themselves, engaging the support of elected officials and the media to push back against their landlord's attempts, even inspiring the introduction of a state bill to ban the use of facial recognition in residential dwellings. The Coalition also helped tenants file a legal opposition to the landlord's application with the New York State Homes and Community Renewal. Soon after, the landlord dropped his attempts to install the invasive technology and legislatures continue to examine the privacy rights of New York City tenants.

**“WITHOUT HELP FROM THESE ADVOCATES, HOMEOWNERS LIKE ME  
WOULD BE IN THE DARK ABOUT HOW TO SAVE OUR HOMES.”**

**- TOYIN ADEKOYA, CLIENT WHOSE HOME LSNYC SAVED FROM FORECLOSURE**



A blue-tinted photograph of a courtroom. In the foreground, a microphone on a stand is positioned on a desk. In the background, another microphone on a stand is visible, and a person is partially seen on the right side of the frame. The overall scene is dimly lit, with a strong blue color cast.

# KEEPING ICE OUT OF COURTS

**IN A HUGE VICTORY FOR IMMIGRANTS, LEGAL SERVICES NYC ALONG WITH A COALITION OF ADVOCATES, SUCCESSFULLY PUSHED THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION TO ISSUE A NEW RULE PROHIBITING ICE FROM ARRESTING INDIVIDUALS IN STATE COURTHOUSES WITHOUT A JUDICIAL WARRANT OR JUDICIAL ORDER.**

The rule change followed a report by the coalition showing a 1700% increase in ICE courthouse operations since 2016, which prohibited immigrants' ability to access justice and hindering court stakeholders' ability to do their job. New York is the first state in the country to make this groundbreaking rule change.



# REUNITING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

**ANA BATIZ MANAGED TO ESCAPE HONDURAS WITH HER TWO DAUGHTERS, KIRAD AND SUSAN, FLEEING PERSECUTION DUE TO HER RACE AND HIV STATUS.**

However, when Ana arrived at the US border with her daughters, they were separated. Susan, who was 18 years old, was treated as an adult and quickly deported after she failed her initial asylum interview. Kirad was allowed to stay as a minor. Legal Services NYC intervened and helped Ana win her asylum case, then filed a derivative asylum application for Susan who was later reunited with her mom and sister. "This past year has been really tough because Susan has gone through a lot of things and I haven't been there for her," Ana said. "But I'm very happy now because very soon my other daughter will be here with me and that's really exciting."

**"THIS IS THE HAPPIEST DAY EVER AND I CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH WHEN I CAN GO TO CAMEROON TO SEE MY MOTHER!"**

— FAITH, 7 YEARS OLD, A CLIENT WHOM LSNYC HELPED TO GET HER U.S. CITIZENSHIP

# HELPING THOUSANDS OF BORROWERS DISCHARGE THEIR STUDENT DEBT

**LEGAL SERVICES NYC REQUIRED THE U.S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT TO RETURN \$22,800 IN WRONGFULLY OBTAINED STUDENT DEBT PAYMENTS TO ELDERLY AND DISABLED BORROWERS THEN FORCED THE AGENCY TO CHANGE THEIR DEBT NOTICES TO INFORM DISABLED BORROWERS OF THEIR ABILITY TO DISCHARGE THEIR STUDENT DEBT, HELPING THOUSANDS OF BORROWERS.**

Legal Services NYC sued the U.S. Treasury Department in 2016 after staff learned that the agency was wrongfully garnishing the Social Security payments of elderly and disabled student loan borrowers who had tried to stop the offset but were wrongfully told they couldn't. Borrowers relied on their monthly social security checks for food and shelter, so when the Treasury Department slashed their checks to recover student loan debt, borrowers faced eviction proceedings, utility shut offs, and interruption of medical care. The new information on debt notices will help thousands of borrowers across the U.S. keep their full Social Security checks and maintain a better quality of life.

# ADVOCATING FOR VETERANS

**MR. P, 84, SERVED IN THE KOREAN WAR. HE SUFFERS FROM DEMENTIA, PARKINSON'S DISEASE, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HEART DISEASE, AND RELIES ON ACCESS-A-RIDE FOR TRANSPORTATION.**

Mr. P's son contacted Legal Services NYC's Veterans Justice Project when he found out that his father's \$1,200 a month Social Security benefit was slated to be reduced by \$240 a month, leaving Mr. P unable to get through the month and pay for basic living expenses like food and rent. Legal Services NYC learned that the IRS was imposing the \$240 a month "levy" because they claimed Mr. P owed a \$5,000 tax debt. As a result of the Veterans Justice Project's advocacy, the IRS reversed the levy and agreed to stop all collection activities. Mr. P can now keep his apartment and afford basic necessities.

**"LEGAL SERVICES NYC HELPED ME STAY IN MY APARTMENT WHICH HAS ALLOWED ME TO LIVE WITHOUT THE STRESS AND FEAR OF NOT HAVING A ROOF OVER MY HEAD. HAVING AN APARTMENT WHERE I CAN SLEEP AND FEEL SAFE AT THE END OF THE DAY HAS BEEN SO IMPORTANT TO MY REHABILITATION."**

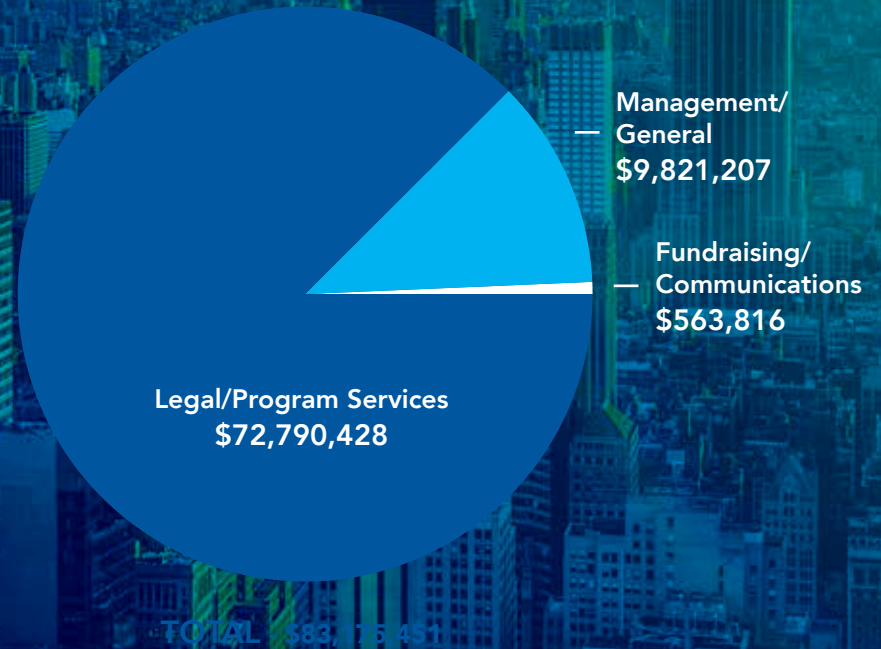
**-ABDIEL JOSEPH, RETIRED AIR FORCE VETERAN, CLIENT, AND LSNYC BOARD MEMBER**

# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE

Legal Services Corporation and Other Federal Contracts	\$14,159,080
Interest on Lawyers Accounts	\$5,528,335
New York State Contracts	\$16,935,195
New York City Contracts	\$39,551,640
Events and Individual Donors	\$1,537,192
Foundations	\$5,072,235
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$82,783,677</b>
<b>DONATED PRO BONO SERVICES</b>	<b>\$42,207,330</b>

## EXPENSES



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