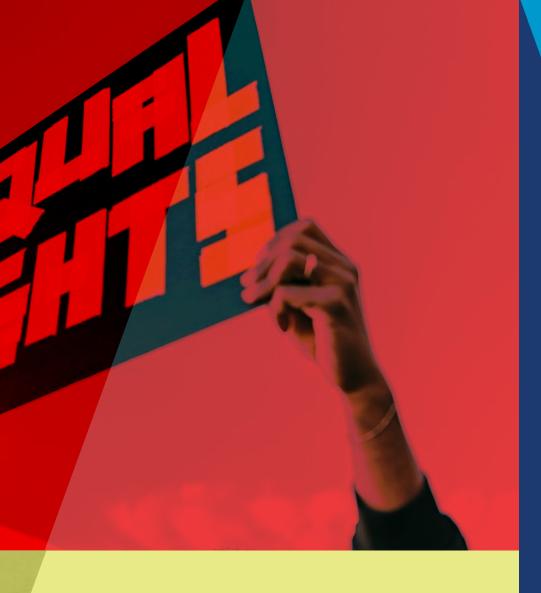


# **OUR MISSION**

We are civil rights lawyers and advocates working to secure racial equity and economic opportunity for all. We provide legal representation through partnerships with the private bar, and we collaborate with grassroots organizations and other advocacy groups to implement community-based solutions that advance civil rights.







## **HOW WE WORK**

We collaborate with community leaders, advocacy organizations, and attorneys to craft and implement community-based solutions and policy reform that disrupt patterns of discrimination. Through longstanding partnerships with member law firms, we provide high quality legal assistance to clients and communities in litigation and transactional matters. We use a broad range of advocacy tools that include direct legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, community education, and coalition building.



The fight is not over.

We have to continue to fight. And sometimes, you have to fight the old battles over and over again. For the next generation. For the generation yet unborn.

You too can make a contribution and you must.

- John Lewis



**Bonnie Allen,**Executive Director & CEO

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Just two years ago, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights proudly celebrated our 50th anniversary with a crowd of nearly 500 supporters. We honored our founding law firms and our first executive director, and we listened to Nikole Hannah-Jones' unvarnished words about America's ugly truth soon after she released the New York Times' 1619 Project. We remembered our first case – a demand for a Department of Justice investigation into the murder of Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago police. Then – as now – we never shied away from taking on powerful forces in government and the private sector to fight for justice for Black and Brown people in our city and state..

Looking back on that celebratory moment, we could not have imagined the deadly events that would unfold within months. In early 2020 a mysterious virus appeared that would quickly grow into a global pandemic, killing hundreds of thousands of people in our country alone. A disproportionate percentage of those who became ill and died were Black and Latinx. COVID-19 also produced an economic shutdown that left many families in despair. Children of low-income families without the resources for at-home learning would face monumental obstacles in their educational progress.

In the summer of 2020, we witnessed the brutal murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. The streets of Chicago and other cities erupted in anger as people of all ages and races demonstrated under the banner of Black Lives Matter. Civil rights organizations like ours were challenged to step up and meet the moment as a new civil rights movement was born.

As these crises unfolded, Chicago Lawyers' Committee doubled down on our racial equity mission and community lawyering approach to our work. With a new strategic plan, we expanded and deepened relationships with community-based organizations to understand and be guided by their advocacy priorities. We continued to build on our 50-year history of partnering with the private bar to add expertise and legal capacity to fuel our work. We challenged racial disparities by filing a lawsuit with our Just Democracy Illinois partners to require the state to fully implement Automatic Voter Registration. We challenged the City of Chicago's egregious abuse of Tax Increment Financing to subsidize the Lincoln Yards mega-development in a white and wealthy part of the city. We launched a COVID-19 Rapid Response Legal Clinic for nonprofits and small businesses in partnership with some of our member law firms. These are just a few examples of the work you will read more about in the pages that follow.

During 2019-2020, our staff and our board became more diverse in terms of age, race, and lived experience. As the new civil rights movement continues to grow, we are building a legal advocacy force to partner with Black and brown communities in the fight for justice.

As we head into yet another uncertain year, I am deeply grateful for the circle of love and support wrapped around Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights: our staff, board members, pro bono attorneys, donors, and community partners. Thank you for standing with us.

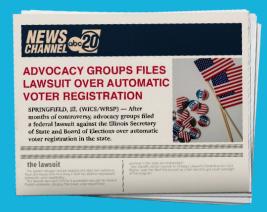
Together, we will march on ... Until Victory Is Won.

Bonnie Allen, Executive Director & CEO

Bannie E. allen

# VOTING RIGHTS

We work to prevent, reduce, and eliminate barriers to voting and civic participation, especially in communities of color and low-income communities, to ensure that each eligible citizen is able to cast a ballot and make her voice heard. Our work includes advocacy for stronger laws and policies, comprehensive Election Protection, training and education, and litigation to enforce and defend strong election laws.



In 2019-2020, we worked on Automatic Voter Registration, election protection for community members in Illinois and Indiana, voting in Cook County Jail, and strengthening voter access for re-entering citizens through "civics in prison."

#### Litigating to Enforce Automatic Voter Registration

In early 2020, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of six advocacy groups representing the nonpartisan Just Democracy Illinois coalition to fix the implementation of Automatic Voter Registration (or AVR) in Illinois. Our lawsuit charged that the Illinois Secretary of State's Office and the State Board of Elections failed to implement the law, in violation of federal and local voting statutes. After a year of back-and-forth negotiations, we reached a settlement with the Secretary of State's office that fixes AVR by providing language assistance, protecting ineligible community members, and creating a legally binding channel of communication between marginalized community members and the government. The AVR settlement means that a lot of voters across Illinois who've been left out of the process will finally be able to access the ballot, especially non-English speaking voters and voters of color. It also means that under-aged and non-citizen community members are protected from accidentally being registered to vote and getting in trouble with the law. This settlement really strengthens our democracy at a time when many states across the country are attempting to weaken it.



Attorney Chuck Smith of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP worked pro bono to lead our AVR litigation.





# Conducting Election Protection for Illinois and Indiana

Across the nation, COVID-19 impacted every facet of life, including civic engagement in the March 2020 primary election and the November 2020 general election. Recognizing that urgent change was required to help eligible voters cast their ballots in the midst of this public health crisis, we advocated for a comprehensive set of reforms to Illinois laws. Just as Black and Latinx communities have been disproportionately harmed by COVID-19 due to pre-existing racial disparities in public health, so will communities of color continue to face unequal barriers to the ballot box unless we intentionally address those racial gaps.

On November 3, 2020, Chicago Lawyers' Committee mobilized over 300 dedicated volunteers to answer calls to the national Election Protection hotline (866-0UR-VOTE) and conduct in-person poll-watching to assist voters across two states who encountered problems casting their ballots. We received a record-breaking 1,500 calls from voters in Illinois and Indiana who experienced voter intimidation, tech issues, election judge misconduct, and lack of in-language assistance. Indiana voters faced extraordinary barriers, with one of the earliest poll closing times and mail ballot receipt deadlines in the country. But there were many victories for voter access as well. We are proud of our staff and volunteers who worked long hours to protect voting rights.

# **Enacting 'Civics in Prison'** in Illinois

In August of 2019, we won a huge victory with the passage of HB 2541, the "Re-Entering Citizens Civics Education Act." Chicago Lawyers' Committee provided legal counsel and technical support in drafting HB 2541, which was the culmination of classes taught at Stateville Correctional Center and DePaul University. We partnered with pro bono attorneys at Latham & Watkins LLP, Professor Christina Rivers of DePaul, Chicago Votes, Inner City Muslim Action Network, and incarcerated and returning community members to help write the bill and advocate for its passage. With the help of our hard- working coalition and elected champions like Rep. Sonya Harper, Sen. Robert Peters, Gov. J.B. Pritzker, and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton who leads the state's Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative (JEO), we were able to get the bill to pass with nearly unanimous bipartisan support. The law—the first of its kind in the United States-mandates peer-led voter and civics education workshops for incarcerated citizens as part of their release process.



Governor J.B. Pritzker and advocates at the Reentering Citizens Civic Education Act signing ceremony in August 2019.

## **EDUCATION EQUITY**

We protect and promote access to education by addressing the individual and systemic barriers that disproportionately impact Black and Latinx students, families, and communities. We work to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and address educational disparities by conducting individual student representation, advocacy for systemic school policy reform, and education and collaboration through the Transforming School Discipline Collaborative (TSDC).

In 2020, COVID hit under-resourced schools in Black and Latinx communities particularly hard. Many children lacked access to wi-fi and a quiet space to engage in online learning. Others were caring for siblings or sick parents, or helping to earn money to support their families. Our team quickly prepared and disseminated toolkits that offered timely resources to schools about challenges with remote learning and how to support students experiencing trauma. In the summer of 2020, we

pivoted to a remote format for our annual TSDC convening, Reimagining Community in the Return to School, and welcomed participation from educators, youth, and restorative justice practitioners. Youth leaders discussed critical topics including racial equity, allyship, restorative justice, traumaresponsive care, police-free schools, school discipline, and the needs of students with disabilities.



#### Supporting #CopsOutCPS

In Chicago's underinvested South and West Side neighborhoods, mental health resources are scarce, and more than three-quarters of CPS students come from low-income households. These students are vulnerable to being expelled, suspended, or pushed out for challenging behaviors that stem from trauma. As the Police-Free Schools movement gathered new momentum during the summer of 2020, we supported students' advocacy to end law enforcement presence in Chicago Public Schools and other public-school districts. Our team presented research at a youth-led virtual hearing as well as a virtual teach-in aimed at parents and educators.

#### **Taking Legal Action to Protect Students**

When a school district repeatedly failed to protect a student from racist bullying, we stepped in. Chicago Lawyers' Committee filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of an African American elementary school student challenging the school district's failure to adequately address and prevent years of racial harassment by fellow students. The lawsuit resulted in a judgment of \$200,000 for the student and his family.



Jennifer Nava, a CPS graduate with the #PoliceFreeSchools coalition, speaks during a panel on Police Free Schools & Discipline.

# EQUITABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

We work with grassroots organizations and coalitions in communities most affected by poverty, racial disparities, gentrification, and displacement using tools including direct representation, policy advocacy, and systemic litigation. We also provide legal advice and support to groups establishing community zoning boards, community land trusts, and using other approaches to secure affordable housing, local hiring, and environmental justice. Our housing team uses testing, systemic litigation, public education, and advocacy to combat racial discrimination and other housing barriers.

# Protecting Communities Near the Obama Presidential Center

In September of 2020, after five years of intense community organizing, Chicago's City Council unanimously passed the Woodlawn Housing Preservation Ordinance, a historic law to stop the displacement of thousands of Black residents who live near the future Obama Presidential Center.

As legal counsel to the Obama CBA Coalition leading this effort, Chicago Lawyers' Committee was involved from the beginning, shaping their demands into a Community Benefits Agreement (or CBA) proposal and organizing community discussions to gather input. Starting in 2018, Chicago Lawyers' Committee conducted legal research to turn the CBA proposal into a city ordinance and negotiate with City officials. After a long stalemate, Ald. Jeanette Taylor introduced the ordinance in July of 2019. The final compromise included:

- The reservation of 52 City-owned vacant lots for affordable housing for people earning up to 50% of the Area Median Income.
- A "right of first refusal" for tenants, meaning that a landlord who decides to sell their building must offer their tenants the option to purchase it first before going on the market.



Jawanza Malone, former Executive Director for the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) and a leader with the Obama CBA Coalition, pictured in 2019.

- A \$1 million commitment to the Home Improvement Grant Program, allowing Woodlawn residents who have owned and lived in their home for more than five years to apply for grants of up to \$20,000 dollars.
- A \$500,000 commitment to the Renew Woodlawn program, which helps low- and middle-income people buy homes in the neighborhood.

On September 9, 2020, City Council unanimously voted to pass the Woodlawn Housing Preservation Ordinance after a hardfought advocacy campaign led by community groups. Chicago Lawyers' Committee continues to stay involved, ensuring that these protections are implemented to their fullest.

#### **Winning Racial Equity in Cannabis**

In 2019, Illinois passed a law to legalize recreational marijuana. At the time, many hailed it as the most equitable and progressive cannabis law in the nation. Yet as cannabis companies in Illinois began to generate millions in revenue, people of color were still rarely afforded substantial wages, worker protections, healthcare, a voice at work, or any share in the profits and ownership of new cannabis businesses. In Chicago, Black people continue to be arrested for marijuana use at much higher rates than white people.



Akele Parnell, former attorney for Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights speaks at City Hall about the CBA agreement with Nature's Care

Realizing that the cannabis industry would not be held accountable by state officials, a group called the Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition began organizing to ensure that cannabis legalization in Illinois brings equity, justice and repair to the communities most harmed by the War on Drugs. Chicago Lawyers' Committee joined forces as the group's legal counsel, helping to strategize campaigns and win real concessions from dispensaries and lawmakers.

In early 2020, the coalition successfully signed the nation's first-ever Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with a cannabis operator, Nature's Care, to ensure the economic success of the dispensary is linked with benefits for the communities most disproportionately harmed by the War on Drugs. Because of that CBA, Nature's Care is legally required to provide living wage jobs for disproportionately impacted individuals, hire 75% of employees from disproportionately impacted areas within two years, donate 10% of their net profits to community organizations, contract products and services from minority and social equity businesses, create a training and career development program for employees, and host "know-your-rights" educational events and participate in National Expungement Week.

"This CBA is a blueprint for equity for existing cannabis companies," said attorney Akele Parnell formerly of Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. In July, Chicago Lawyers' Committee helped the Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition successfully sign a second CBA with dispensary operator Zen Leaf.

# LEGAL HELP FOR NONPROFITS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

We help to build, strengthen and support nonprofit organizations and small businesses that contribute to economic development and deliver social services in low-income neighborhoods, focusing on historically disinvested communities of color on Chicago's South and West Sides. We provide nonprofit leaders and small business owners with the knowledge to sustain the quality of their programs, improve outcomes, and spur economic development.

## **VOLUNTEER HOURS**

2019 Pro Bono Works Volunteers



TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK



31%

LITIGATION, RESEARCH

TRANSACTIONAL ASSISTANCE TO NONPROFITS AND SMALL

1 [exclusively the Mayoral Race and Runoff Election, since no state or federal elections were held that year] 2 [of which 19% is SAP, fair housing is 4%, voting rights support (excluding EP) is 3%, Ed Equity is 2%, and community safety (hcp & police accountability) is 3%]

2020 Pro Bono Works Volunteers



TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK



13%

41%

GATION, RESEARCH TRANSACTIONAL ASSISTANCE
POLICY ADVOCACY TO NONPROFITS AND SMALL
SUPPORT BUSINESSES

1 [2020 was a big election year; some years EP is 0% because no elections are held, and in big election years it's nearly half of our total volunteers] 2 [of which 11% is SAP, Ed Equity is 1%, community safety is 1%, and others are less than 1%; pandemic affected these programs] 3 [this includes the Covid-19 virtual legal clinic]



Our Emerging Nonprofit Training Program provided knowledge and support to nonprofit founders like Isabel Gonzalez Smith, who attended our "bootcamp" educational series in Spring 2019. That fall, she applied for Chicago Latina Moms to receive pro bono legal assistance, and we placed her with volunteer attorneys at Winston & Strawn LLP. After receiving legal assistance with their corporate legal work, income tax exemption, and board governance guidance and

counseling, Chicago Latina Moms secured its 501c3 status. That allowed the organization to fundraise and distribute \$50,000 in mutual aid assistance to Chicago families who were unable to get the COVID-19 federal stimulus check.

Chicago Lawyers' Committee joined the North Lawndale Legal Clinic in 2019, adding our small business legal services to their clinic. Our volunteer attorneys helped to draft formation documents for Single Member LLC's. The clinic was extremely efficient and accessible for our clients: after one appointment, they would have all the required documents prepared to file with the Secretary of State.

#### **COVID-19 Virtual Legal Clinics**

In April 2020, we partnered with several member law firms to launch a virtual legal clinic for small businesses and nonprofits impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. That year, we received about 200 requests for assistance, including questions on how to access relief funds, navigate employment furloughs, restructure commercial leases and contract termination clauses, and, in some cases, file for bankruptcy.

### SETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

#### **Balancing the Scales of Justice**

In 2013, a 35-year old mother named Ms. W\* was taking the Metra one night to get home when she got the wrong directions from the conductor. After waiting for close to an hour for the wrong train, Ms. W's phone was running out of power, and she was running out of patience. She exchanged verbal barbs with the conductor, who seemed to insinuate that she couldn't read. The conductor called security guards to the scene, who removed Ms. W from the train and quickly started threatening her verbally and physically. "We're going to take you somewhere where nobody will hear you," she recalls one officer saying.

In an incident captured on camera, the officers pushed Ms. W to the floor and then lifted her by the neck until her feet left the ground, stepping on her hijab in the process. They took her to a holding facility for several hours and charged her with disorderly conduct, which was later dropped. She wasn't allowed to make a phone call or use the restroom. "That was hell on earth," remembers Ms. W.



J. Cunyon Gordon, Director of the Settlement Assistance Program (seated) works with summer PILI Intern Natasha Wilkins (right)



Jeffrey Cummings, U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois and a former board member, often refers civil rights litigants without attorneys to SAP.

Every year, in collaboration with the federal court, Chicago Lawyers' Committee helps individuals like Ms. W who can't afford to hire a lawyer but want to bring a civil rights lawsuit Since 2006, the Settlement Assistance Program (SAP) has recruited and trained hundreds of volunteer attorneys to help low-income individuals navigate the judicial system. The cases range from abuse of prisoners to employment discrimination and hate incidents.

In 2019, an SAP volunteer attorney named Ali Schaller worked with Ms. W on her case. She counseled Ms. W on her legal options and negotiated with the opposing counsel, ultimately reaching a favorable and confidential financial remedy in a settlement conference. "Ali was helpful and very instrumental to the success of my case," said Ms. W. "I saw it as an opportunity to tell my truth."

\*Ms. W's full name has been removed to protect her privacy.

## **HONOR ROLL DONATIONS**

2019

#### \$100,000 and above

Kirkland & Ellis LLP Polk Bros. Foundation Robert R. McCormick Foundation The Joyce Foundation The Reva & David Logan Foundation

#### \$50,000 to \$99,999

Alphawood Foundation Chicago Bar Foundation Lawyers' Trust Fund of Illinois Mayer Brown LLP McDougal Family Foundation Sidley Austin LLP

#### \$25,000 to \$49,000

Chicago Community Trust DLA Piper US LLP Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP Schiff Hardin LLP Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP Stowell & Friedman, Ltd.

#### \$10,000 to \$24,999

Baker McKenzie LLP Center for Secure and Modern Elections **Linton Childs Dentons** Eimer Stahl **Barry Fields** Foley & Lardner Michelle & Ryan Kilkenney McDermott Will & Emery McGuireWoods LLP Lisa Mever & Nate Eimer **Paul Hastings Reed Smith** Sevfarth Shaw LLP Thompson Coburn LLP U.S. District Court Northern District of IL Winston & Strawn **Woods Fund Chicago** 

#### \$5,000 to \$9,999

**Analysis Group** Barlit Beck LLP **Chase Foundation Combined Insurance** Edward Feldman FifthThird Foundation Julia & Sonny Garg **Geosyntec Consultants** James Hurst Illinois Equal Justice Foundation Jenner & Block Joseph & Bessie Feinberg Foundation JurySync LLC Priscilla Kersten Lauren Loew & Taylor Hammond **David Lurie** Miller Shakman Levine & Feldman Miner, Barnhill & Galland Morgan, Lewis, & Bockius LLP Neal Reenan Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP Coco Soodek Donna Vobornik & Marc Lauerman **Walter Mander Foundation** 

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Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen P.C. Vanessa Archil Ashe Benefits Group LTD Anthony Barash **Ronit Barrett** José Behar Myles Berman Christine Binotti Jack Block **Andrew Bloomer** Ben Blustein BMO Wealth Management **Boodell Nader Boulos** Christopher Butler Byrne Byrne and Co

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The Horton Group The Northern Trust Company

The StopAlong Don & Liz Thompson Wade Thomson

University of Notre Dame Law School Donna Welch

Michael Wright

#### \$100,000 and above

Alphawood Foundation The Joyce Foundation Robert R. McCormick Foundation Kirkland & Ellis LLP Lawyers' Trust Fund of Illinois

#### \$50,000 to \$99,999

Chicago Bar Foundation John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation McDougal Family Foundation

#### \$25,000 to \$49,000

Eimer Stahl Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP Mayer Brown LLP Schiff Hardin LLP Schwab Charitable Sidley Austin LLP Square One Foundation Tides Foundation

#### \$10,000 to \$24,999

Baker McKenzie LLP Dentons Foley & Lardner **Hull Family Foundation** Michelle & Ryan Kilkenney Lauren Loew & Taylor Hammond McDermott Will & Emery McGuireWoods LLP Lisa Mever & Nate Eimer Morgan, Lewis, & Bockius LLP Perkins Coie Foundation Seyfarth Shaw LLP Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP Thompson Coburn LLP Walden Charitable Fund Woods Fund Chicago

#### \$5,000 to \$9,999

Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen P.C. Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella, P.C. Chapman and Cutler LLP **Linton Childs** Creospan, Inc **Exelon Corporation** Barry Fields Geosyntec Consultants Joseph & Bessie Feinberg Foundation Jennifer & Stuart Litwin Noble Kinsman Brewing Company Pierce Family Foundation Susan Crown Exchange Maureen Sweeney & Marc Lauerman **Donna Vohornik** Walter Mander Foundation

#### \$1,000 to \$4,999

Bonnie Allen Asian Americans Advancing Justice José Behar

Myles Berman David Blickenstaff Jack Block **Buckley LLP** Christopher Butler

Byrne Byrne and Co Rachel Cantor

Aneel Chablani & Kate Mitchell

**Brian Chang** Benjamin Crowder Dechert LLP

Brenna DeVaney & David Bartolacci Adam Diederich & Colleen Harvey

Maureen Dixon Kate Dowd

Oi Eng-Crandus & Shlomo Crandus

Equal Justice America

Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP

Edward Feldman Stephen Fitzell Jonathan Flaum **FTI Consulting** Sonny & Julia Garg Sonya Gilbert & Paul Greenwalt

Hughes Socol Piers Resnick Dym Ltd.

Courtney Sarah Hull

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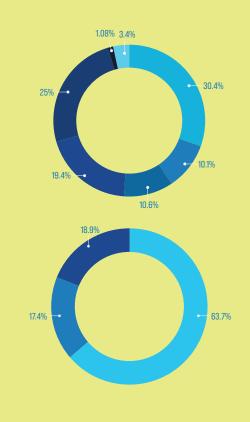
## **FINANCIALS**

**REVENUE 2020** 

Net Assets - BOY

Net Assets- EOY

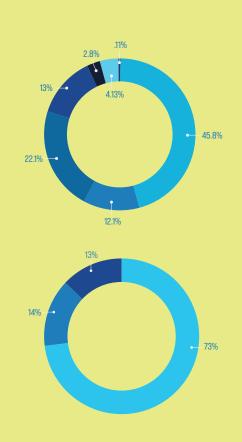
REVENUE 2019 Foundation Grants Law Firm Contributions Government Grants Fundraising Events Attorney's Fees Individuals Other	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	957,105 317,750 334,816 610,494 787,122 34,047 108,240	30.4%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$	3,149,574	100%
EXPENSES Program Services Management and General Fundraising	\$ \$ \$	1,380,412 375,892 410,348	63.7% • 17.4% • 18.9% •
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	2,166,652	100%
Change in Net Assets Net Assets - BOY Net Assets- EOY	\$ \$ \$	-569,940 1,641,946 1,072,006	



#### **Foundation Grants** 1,164,532 45.8% Law Firm Contributions \$ 309,025 12.1% **Government Grants** \$ 562,609 22.1% **Fundraising Events** \$ 329,576 13% \$ Attorney's Fees 2,928 .11% Individuals \$ 70,642 2.8% Other \$ 105,145 4.13% **TOTAL REVENUE** \$ 2,544,457 100% **EXPENSES Program Services** 1,633,307 73% Management and General \$ 314,724 14% **Fundraising** 289,902 13% **TOTAL EXPENSES** \$ 2,237,933 100% Change in Net Assets 1,153,850

488,096

1,641,946



### **OUR TEAM**

### Member Firms 2020

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Noelle Brennan & Associates, Ltd.

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2021

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Coordinator