

# **CATHOLIC MIGRATION SERVICES**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Catholic Migration Services (CMS) increased access to justice for thousands of low-income immigrant households in New York City, predominantly in Queens and Brooklyn. Our target population, low-income immigrants, face numerous barriers to accessing justice, including language barriers, fear of deportation, unfamiliarity with the U.S. legal system, and inability or difficulty to pay filing and legal fees. These barriers are heightened for the influx of new arrivals from the southern border who we began to serve in April 2022, as further explained in Section 3 (Obstacles). We worked with our clients to overcome these barriers by providing multilingual free legal services and leveraging our collaborations and pro bono relationships to provide pro se assistance. We also significantly increased our community education activities to reach our target population and inform them of their rights.

From April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, CMS accomplished the following:

- Closed 3321 cases which is 59% percent more than in the prior fiscal year.
- 7991 individuals benefitted from receiving CMS legal services.
- Conducted 2743 new immigration, housing, and employment intakes.
- Helped 295 immigrants become naturalized U.S. citizens.
- Defended 102 immigrants in their removal proceedings.
- Helped 72 immigrants to adjust their legal status keeping families intact for some or ensuring the personal safety of others.
- Helped 65 young immigrants renew DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), thereby preventing their removal from the US and enabling them to work lawfully.
- Saved low-income immigrants \$239,590 in fee waivers for their immigration filings.
- Obtained \$542,714.57 for 49 low-wage immigrant workers in settlements and judgements for unpaid wages.
- Prevented or delayed evictions for 22 households.



**Population Served: Low Income Immigrant Populations**

**Total Funding: \$5,504,521**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$110,000**

**Staffing Full Time Equivalent:**

- Total Staff: 45
- Paralegals: 13
- Lawyers: 20
- Other: 12

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

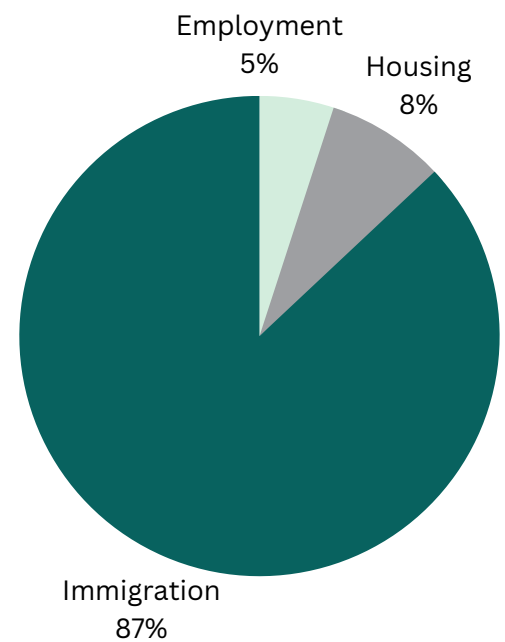
**Immigration:** J’s family was politically active in Venezuela - members of the opposition movement to the current government. Because of the family’s activism, J and his parents faced horrible persecution. J was about 11 years old when government forces stormed his home to beat his mother and father. The government forces tied J up and pointed a gun to his head threatening to kill him if the family provide information. This is only the tip of the iceberg of the nightmarish life that J and his family lived in Venezuela. Fortunately, J and his mother were able to flee their country in 2018.

Our CMS attorney’s advocacy resulted in the termination of his deportation proceedings in immigration court. This means that he does not have to worry about being returned to Venezuela, where he could be killed. We have also applied for J to receive a grant of asylum based on his father’s asylee status. J was granted (and is now waiting for the renewal of) a work permit and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which opened a door of opportunities for his bright future.

Today, J is a successful high school student in New York City. He is involved in many activities including leading student council, instrument playing, and participating at a local church. Recently, J participated in a gifted student’s program at an Ivy League school.

**Employment:** CMS is currently representing two brothers from Mexico who are former employees of a Manhattan comedy club in a federal court case seeking unpaid wages. Our clients worked long hours cleaning the comedy club and bussing tables. They earned as little as \$7 per hour and did not receive overtime pay. The case recently settled for \$115,000.00.

**7,991 people benefitted from 3,321 legal cases closed**



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

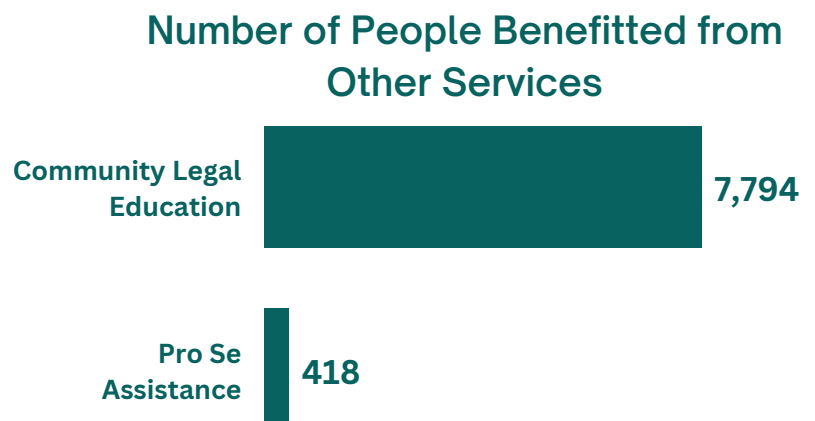
CMS provided Know Your Rights, trainings, and other community legal education events in-person and through virtual means. The goals of our community education activities are to inform low-income immigrants, tenants and workers of their rights and the availability of our services to help them enforce those rights. In total, we reached 7,794 people using our various education methods.

CMS also hosted pro se clinics for recently arrived migrants and Legal Permanent Residents to receive pro se assistance in completing and filing their asylum, work authorization, TPS or naturalization applications. In total, we reached 418 people at these clinics. We anticipate this number will grow as our Pro Se Plus collaboration ramps up.

In response to the high volume of new migrants entering New York City beginning in the spring of 2022, New York City opened a Navigation Center in Manhattan to provide wrap-around services to this population, including social services, case management, and legal services. On 3 dates in the fall and winter of 2022, CMS deployed a team to the Navigation Center to provide legal services to the new migrants. The CMS team provided a general presentation and conducted screenings to over 100 individuals.

On March 22nd, CMS conducted a Know Your Rights presentation for a new community partner, Carrol Gardens Association on the labor rights of domestic workers. Over 50 domestic workers, including nannies and housekeepers received information from Senior Counsel, David Colodny and participated in a lively question and answer session. As a result of this presentation and new relationship, CMS expects to receive referrals from this group of workers who because of the presentation discovered legal violations of their current or past employment.

**8,212 People  
Benefitted from  
Services Other  
Than Direct  
Legal Services**



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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CMS has worked to enhance one of our client databases, Legal Server, to improve screening for our naturalization and employment programs. Additionally, we constructed an online screening form to use on our website in order to improve access to our services for certain communities. Currently, we are in the process of revamping our website and hope to reveal our new site in Fall 2023.

We also added video conference equipment to our expanded Queens office space to allow staff to participate in remote hearings, meetings, and conferences.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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CMS is committed to providing its staff with opportunities for training and professional development. Attorneys are provided with reimbursement for NYS Bar Registration fees plus an additional yearly budget of up to \$500 to cover other bar or professional association membership dues, CLEs, and related expenses. Our staff regularly participate in trainings, including CLEs, sponsored by the New York Immigration Coalition, Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), National Employment Lawyers Association NY, and trainings through the coalitions, LEAP and CILEC. Additionally, CMS has an account with the Practising Law Institute, which provides live and on demand training, including CLE, in a wide variety of areas. Recently, CMS has also acquired a membership in Skills Path that provides online professional training on issues including time management, Excel, word processing, and supervisory skills.

On January 25th, our staff received training on how to use language line services and best practices in working with interpreters.

As per New York City law, staff is required to participate in a sexual harassment training on an annual basis. For the last three years, CMS has offered this training via on demand video.

We will be holding an all-staff DEI session entitled “Debiasing the Hiring Process” on April 28, 2023. Thirteen members of our staff are also participating in a Burnout prevention training on May 5, 2023.

# IMPACT CASES

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## ***Bernarez v. Alternate Staffing:***

Bernarez v. Alternate Staffing is a class action case with approximately 200 members. Along with pro-bono co-counsel, CMS represents the plaintiffs, a group of home attendants who were required to work multiple 24 hour shifts each week but only paid for 13 hours per day and not paid overtime premiums despite work weeks of 100 hours or more. For over a year, the parties have been engaging in settlement discussions.

**200**  
**Beneficiaries**  
**were affected**  
**by 1 Impact**  
**Case**

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# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

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CMS has an extensive network of pro-bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers. Our volunteers come from local law schools, existing service programs (Jesuit and Mercy Volunteer Corps.), OCA's Attorney Emeritus Program, or those who learn about CMS and opportunities to help through their local parishes.

A total of thirty-two pro bono attorneys provided services to CMS clients during the past year. The assistance of these attorneys at a time when our services are in such demand allowed us to serve more clients and resulted in impactful beneficial outcomes for CMS clients as illustrated below.

Catholic Migration Services, together with co-counsel the Law Office of Robert McCreanor PLLC, represented a former employee of an Upper West Side Indian restaurant who suffered egregious violations of federal and state minimum wage and overtime laws occurring over many years. The client worked more than 50 hours per week, with an effective rate of pay of between \$5.50 and \$7.00 per hour, at times less than half of the minimum wage. CMS settled this case for \$85,000.

Two housing pro bono attorneys, including a volunteer from the Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP), researched and aided the Managing Attorney for our housing program in preparation for oral argument before the Appellate Division, a case where the tenant prevailed. This was a case in which the landlord had overcharged the tenant for many years. The tenant had won before Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) and in NYS Supreme Court.

The landlord appealed to the Appellate Division, and DHCR’s decision was again upheld. The landlord also sued the tenant in housing court seeking to collect ongoing rent even though the tenant was over \$30,000 by the landlord. Our AEP attorney also drafted papers to keep that case off the calendar pending the appeal.

In August 2022, our Immigration program began hosting four college graduates from the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and Mercy Volunteer Corps. The volunteers, who are with us for a full year, undergo a rigorous 2-week in-house training program to prepare them to work, under attorney supervision, on citizenship applications and political asylum cases.

This year, primarily in the summer, CMS hosted 17 law school student interns who support our Immigration, Employment, and Housing programs. For the interns, CMS staff prepares a full orientation, and each program provides specific information about their practice area. Students work under the supervision of an attorney, receive regular check-in meetings with their supervisor and a final evaluation.



**32 Attorneys volunteered 3,279 hours**

**17 Law Students volunteered 3,431 hours**

**13 Other Volunteers volunteered 691 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 6.2 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

Law Students and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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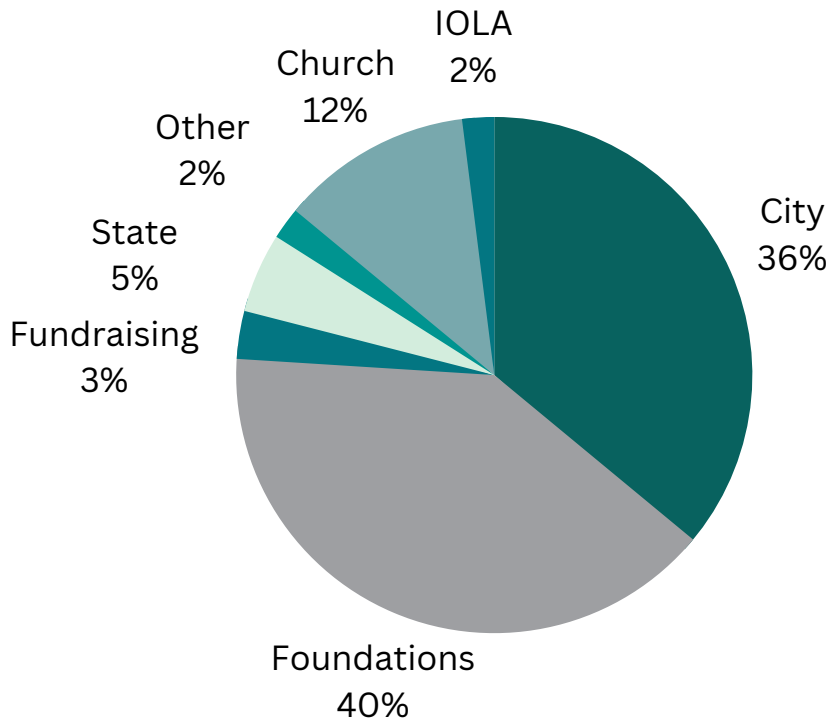
## Legal Services Providers Collaborations:

- Catholic Migration Services is part of the Pro-Se Plus coalition that developed a pilot program to provide legal resources and assistance to the newly arrived migrant community, who have been unable to access traditional full representation immigration legal services. Together with UnLocal, Central American Legal Assistance (CALA), New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), and community groups Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) and MASA, CMS has held clinics, KYR presentations, and conducted legal screenings and pro-se assistance to the large volume of migrants who arrived in New York City in 2022.
- We are a member of the LEAP Coalition, which links 18 legal services providers in initiatives to increase the visibility of our work, share best practices, and develop collaborative trainings and other programming to improve the quality and reach of civil legal services for the poor.
- We belong to Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC), a team of six civil legal services providers and various immigrant-based CBOs. Through this collaboration, the legal services providers provide coordinated non-redundant legal services to underserved immigrant groups. The immigrant-based CBOs include African Communities Together; Chinese Staff & Workers' Association; Damayan Migrant Workers; and DRUM – Desis Rising Up and Moving.
- We are an active participant in Stabilizing New York Coalition (SNYC), a citywide coalition of civil legal services providers that combats the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity companies by organizing low-income tenants to stop eviction and harassment by landlords in their buildings.
- Together with New York Lawyers for Public Interest, we collaborate with various private law firms on naturalization and SCRIE/DRIE application assistance. Last March, we resumed holding workshops and have an upcoming SCRIE/DRIE application workshop planned.
- Catholic Migration Services is very active in the Right to Counsel Coalition which is made up of NYC tenant organizing groups, tenant advocates, law schools and other legal services organizations who work together to ensure safe and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.



# SOURCES OF FUNDING

Catholic Migration Services received **\$5,504,521** in total funding this past year



<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$2,187,500</b>
<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$2,001,162</b>
<b>Church / Religious Funding</b>	<b>\$650,295</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$257,653</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$169,072</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>\$128,839</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>