


MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE

2022-2023

The bottom half of the page features a large, abstract geometric design. It consists of several overlapping shapes: a large teal triangle on the left, a smaller teal triangle on the right, and a grey triangle at the bottom right. The teal triangles point towards each other, meeting at a point near the center of the bottom edge.

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

At Mobilization for Justice, we continued our strong advocacy on behalf of vulnerable New Yorkers to address their critical civil legal needs. During the reporting period, we served 24,991 people citywide and closed 10,747 cases. Our primary target population included people who live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and the working poor, who are predominantly racial and ethnic minorities. As a result of our legal representation and advocacy, we secured more than \$3,018,800 in financial benefits for our clients.

The following is a summary of our program’s major achievements across our four main legal practice areas: **Housing; Economic Justice; Disability and Aging Rights; and Children's Rights**. Our **Housing** work focused on preventing homelessness by defending tenants against eviction and homeowners against foreclosure, protecting tenants’ rights, improving living conditions for tenants, and fighting harassment and discrimination to keep people in their homes. During the reporting period we provided robust full legal representation in court or administrative proceedings to more than 3,350 NYC tenants, and provided advice, counsel, or advocacy services to another 3,850 NYC tenants. Although the pandemic-related eviction moratorium lapsed in January 2022, stays related to tenants who applied for Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds continue to remain in place until the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance makes a final determination on an application. Our **Economic Justice** work focused on ensuring that New Yorkers maintained financial independence and preserved economic stability by combatting predatory products and unfair practices, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. During this reporting period we assisted consumers sued in a variety of debt collection cases and seeking to file for bankruptcy, homeowners sued in foreclosure cases, continued



Population Served: Low Income and Vulnerable New Yorkers

Total Funding: \$20,476,391

Total IOLA Grant: \$576,000

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 151
- Paralegals: 18
- Lawyers: 115
- Other: 18

to advocate for and provide assistance to workers denied wages and unemployment benefits and experiencing discrimination, taxpayers facing problems with the IRS, and for-hire vehicle and taxi drivers fight summonses and crushing medallion debt.

Our **Disability and Aging Rights** work focused on assisting older people and people with disabilities with housing, government benefits and other legal issues. As part of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we targeted our outreach efforts to BIPOC clients with disabilities in the outer boroughs, including the South Bronx. We also focused on resolving problems that New Yorkers with mental health disabilities face in supportive housing. In coalition with SHOUT (Supportive Housing Organized & United Tenants) and other organizations, we continued to advocate for reforms and improvements in supportive housing programs. Our efforts to combat discrimination by assisted living facilities against people who have mobility impairments forced the Department of Health to change the relevant regulations.

Finally, our **Children's Rights** work focused on addressing the legal needs of kinship families taking care of children whose parents cannot and representing low-income students with disabilities to obtain educational supports. During this reporting period, we assisted kinship caregivers secure adoptions and guardianship and achieve legal permanency, enabling relatives to enroll children in school and secure essential medical treatment for children whose parents died during the pandemic. And we successfully litigated 25 impartial hearings, winning compensatory services for students in excess of 6,000 hours of tutoring, 2,000 hours of speech therapy, and 7,500 hours of Applied Behavior Analysis for children with autism. In addition, 12 students were awarded funding to attend private special education schools designed to meet their specific needs.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Immigration

SD identifies as a gay man from Senegal. He survived life-long abuse by his family for his sexual orientation, including being kidnapped, taken to a “reform” camp, detained, tortured, and then released on the premise that they would watch and likely kill him if he continued being who he was born to be. After a journey that took him to the U.S.-Mexico Border, an ankle monitor removed, and countless hours of application preparation by MFJ, which included creating a detailed affidavit of traumatic events,

listing country conditions, obtaining an expert who could testify to SD’s case and conditions in Senegal, we navigated SD through three hours of testimony and cross-examination until the Judge granted Asylum in his favor.

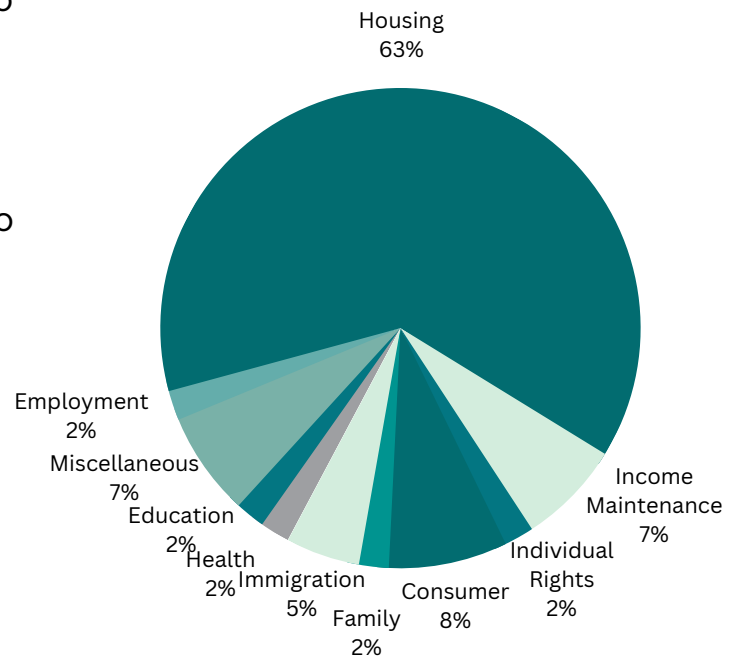
Housing

We met Mr. D in housing court when he was crying in the hallway after being evicted and filing a petition by himself to be restored to possession of his home. Mr. D had been granted two weeks to pay over \$26,000 to get back into his apartment. Without hesitation, we took Mr. D's case and quickly began working on securing getting him a One-Shot Deal to help with the payment of arrears.

However, there were many roadblocks due to Mr. D’s inability to pay his ongoing rent, lack of responsiveness from the city agency responsible for administering One-Shot Deals, and the need for Mr. D to come up with \$6,000 on his own to lower his arrears to an amount such that the agency would even consider his application. We advocated with multiple charities to raise the \$6,000 in record time, worked with Mr. D on the One-Shot Deal application, and filed two court petitions to get Mr. D more time to pay the arrears. Finally, after multiple emails and constant follow up, the city approved Mr. D's One-Shot Deal application.

After running around New York City collecting checks, spending an entire day in court convincing opposing counsel to grant a few more days to gather the very last few thousand dollars, we finally tendered all the checks and Mr. D was restored to his apartment.

24,991
people
benefitted from
10,747
legal cases
closed



**Cases by
Legal Problem
Area**

OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

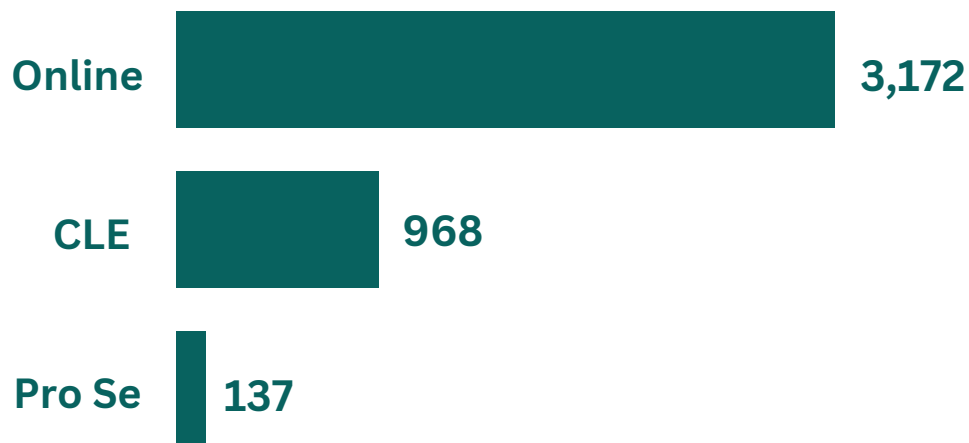
Trainings & Town Halls: Community-based legal education is an integral component of all of our practice areas. During the reporting period, our attorneys and paralegals conducted trainings and town halls (both in-person and virtual) attended by more than 1,000 people. Workshops and other trainings were held for community organizations, elected officials and their constituents, and others on topics including housing, immigration matters, government benefits, mental health, kinship caregiving, and special education. Town halls serve to provide crucial information to large groups of people and help empower everyday New Yorkers with the information and tools they need to navigate legal crises.

4,277
people benefitted
from Services Other
Than Direct Legal
Services

Online Resources: We provide free fact sheets and self-help guides in multiple languages on our website. Target populations include tenants, consumers, Medicare and Medicaid recipients, nursing and adults home residents, immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities. During the reporting period, more than 3,100 fact sheets and guides were downloaded from our website.

Referral Service: During the reporting period, MFJ made more than 1,100 referrals to other organizations on matters that fall outside of our four program areas or were not legal matters.

Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

During the reporting period, we continued to upgrade all staff's desktop computers and desk phones, particularly in our Bronx office. This has improved staff's ability to seamlessly provide services both from home and in the office. And we continued to engage a communications consultant and our Board's Communications Committee to enhance our social media strategy increase our footprint on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, where we provide important legal information to varied audiences.

OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

During the reporting period, we continued to emphasize trainings related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism. In May 2022, all staff participated in a two-part Anti-Racism training conducted by Blue Level. This was followed by a session in October 2022 to review concepts and focus on improving psychological safety in the context of difficult conversations. Additionally, in October 2022 our Board of Directors received training in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and how it relates to organizational culture led by Paula Edgar.

General staff training is ongoing and multi-pronged. For new attorneys, there is an initial new-staff orientation about the history and structure of the organization, the supervisory structure and expectations, best practices in client interactions, policies and procedures and training opportunities. For both new and existing staff, training opportunities are researched, promoted, and tracked by our Managing Attorney for Training & Professional Development. These include: in-house trainings, trainings in coordination with LEAP (e.g., legal research for housing lawyers, immigration considerations for civil practitioners, and NYCHA administrative hearings), Practising Law Institute trainings which we can access for free, and miscellaneous trainings and conferences. All managers are required to attend Management Information Exchange (known better as MIE) trainings that cater to legal services attorney supervisors and the unique challenges they face.

IMPACT CASES

Miller v. City of New York, 23-cv-00065 (E.D.N.Y.)

Mobilization for Justice and co-counsel Gupta Wessler PLLC and Pollock Cohen LLP represent four plaintiffs in a proposed class action lawsuit against the City of New York and the Commissioner of the Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC). MILESTONE: We filed the case challenging the TLC's policy and practice of targeting drivers in undercover street hail operations and issuing them unconstitutionally excessive civil penalties in violation of the Eighth Amendment. We also allege that these operations primarily target people of color and/or immigrants and non-English speakers in violation of the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. We describe how the TLC's undercover operations are primarily used to pad its own coffers on the backs of low-income individuals. IMPACT: We estimate that the number of class members impacted by the TLC's unconstitutional practices, dating back to 2012, is over 25,000.

Greater Chautauqua Federal Credit Union v. Quattrone, 22-cv-02753 (S.D.N.Y.)

Mobilization for Justice represents a low-income consumer and a Buffalo-based legal services organization as proposed intervenor-defendants in a constitutional challenge brought by several credit unions to New York State's recently enacted Fair Consumer Judgment Interest Act (FCJIA), which prospectively and retroactively lowered the annual interest rate on consumer debt judgments from 9% to 2%. MFJ worked extensively along with other consumer rights advocates to help draft and ensure passage of

All Impact Cases:

Almanzar et al. v. C&I Associates, Inc. et al., 14-cv-1810 (S.D.N.Y.)

Bagley et al. v. The New York State Department of Health, 1:15-cv-04845-FB-CLP (E.D.N.Y.)

Barker v. Rokosz, 19-cv-00514 (E.D.N.Y.)

Chapman v. 1834 Caton Partners LLC & US Realty Corp., 518839/2020, Supreme Court, Kings County

Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc. et al. v. Cuomo et al., 18 Civ. 3196 (S.D.N.Y.)

Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc. et al. v. Kosova Properties, Inc. et al., 16 Civ. 03537 (S.D.N.Y.)

Golightly v. Uber Technologies, Inc., No. 21 Civ. 03005 (S.D.N.Y.)

O'Toole v. Cuomo, 13-cv-4166 (E.D.N.Y.)

Ramirez v. 2020 Grand Realty, LLC, 20-cv-9385 (S.D.N.Y.)

Stephens v. Borah Goldstein, Altschuler, Nahins & Goidel, P.C., 19-cv-11702.

Tejada Gonzalez & FHJC v. Ved Parkash & Parkash 2051 LLC, 250329/2017, Supreme Court, Bronx

Valerie Britt et al. v. Metropolitan Transit Authority et al, No. 22-Civ-151336, Sup. Ct., NY County

Watt v. Bank of America, 23-cv-00233-RPK-JRC (EDNY)

Miller v. City of New York, 23-cv-00065 (E.D.N.Y.)

Greater Chautauqua Federal Credit Union v. Quattrone, 22-cv-02753 (S.D.N.Y.)

Vasquez et al. v. 309 Menahan Fee Owner LLC et al., LT-309862-21, Civil Court, Kings County

162,557
beneficiaries
were affected by
15
Impact Cases

the law, which sought to reduce the Covid-related hardship and risk of financial instability borne by low-income New Yorkers from consumer debts (including medical, education, auto, and utility debt).
MILESTONE: We filed a motion to intervene that seeks to ensure that the preliminary injunction entered by the federal court hearing the constitutional challenge is narrow and limited.
IMPACT: Approximately two million New Yorkers would be impacted by the decision.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

During the reporting period year, 159 pro bono attorneys, law students and volunteers provided approximately 11,584 hours of service to MFJ and our clients. We have two longstanding externship programs in which associates from Willkie Farr and Gallagher LLP serve four-month rotations in our housing unit. During the reporting period, the externs closed 13 cases. In addition, approximately 35 attorneys participate in our Pro Bono Kinship Caregiver Law Project every year, working on private placement adoption cases. Morrison & Foerster LLP and Shearman & Sterling LLP provide advice and assistance on tax issues, and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP and Sidley Austin LLP provide assistance on special education matters.



112 Attorneys volunteered 6,144 hours

41 Law Students volunteered 4,903 hours

6 Other Volunteers volunteered 537 hours

Each  icon is equal to 15.9 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

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

We have a longstanding and active network of pro bono partners from NYC law firms, banks and corporations who work with our attorneys to leverage the resources available to comprehensively support the legal needs of low-income New Yorkers. Thirteen volunteer attorneys and a law graduate provided assistance in-house this year. We host dozens of law students and Pro Bono Scholars every academic year, each of whom is assigned to one of our four aforementioned practice areas. Several firms also provide pro bono assistance by co-counseling class action lawsuits and other litigation with attorneys which are ongoing and will continue to be litigated over the next year, such as Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison, Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, and Pillsbury Winthrop, who are co-counseling with us on longstanding impact litigations involving our Disability and Aging Rights clients.

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

During the reporting period, some of our most significant collaborations were the following:

The Office of State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal: As Senator Hoylman-Sigal's district is home to a number of our clients, we endeavored to partner with the Senator more actively to develop an educational series of trainings designed to educate the Senator's staff and constituents about their rights. As of now, we've hosted three trainings: one exclusively with the Senator's staff about how to handle housing issues as a caseworker, and two public-facing trainings. The first public "Know Your Rights" training was well attended, with over 50 attendees, as was the second. We are currently planning our third public training and are in discussions with the Senator about beginning an in-person clinic this June.

NYC Department of Education District 79: We partner with the City's Alternative Schools District, which serves over 5,000 students a year, including adults, to provide legal clinics for students seeking assistance with immigration matters. We work with District 79 to provide regular telephonic clinics and collaborate to ensure that prospective clients receive preferred appointment timeslots in a private, confidential settings to ensure that our conversation do not disrupt their work or school schedules. Our District 79 partners help us reach out to clients and serve as an intermediary to assist with any technology issues to provide us with paperwork and documents necessary to evaluate a prospective client's immigration case.

The Office of Assemblymember Phara Souffrant-Forrest: We've partnered with the office of Assemblymember Phara Souffrant-Forrest extensively across a number of our projects here at MFJ. Our housing project has partnered with the member to host a number of Know Your Rights trainings for both the general public and local tenant associations, our Disability and Aging Rights Project has partnered with the member to take on referrals and offer policy expertise, and our Immigration Law Project operates a clinic with a partner organization in the member's district which the member has been supportive of.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Mobilization for Justice received
\$20,476,391
 in total funding this past year

IOLA Grant	\$576,000
City & County	\$13,652,525
Foundations	\$679,811
Federal	\$126,000
Fundraising	\$974,025
State Funding	\$3,926,477
Other	\$541,553
Total	\$20,476,391

