

# CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019



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## MISSION

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Connecticut Legal Services provides access to justice and protects critical civil legal rights of low-income individuals and families through representation, systemic advocacy, advice, collaboration, and education.

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## VISION

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Connecticut Legal Services believes that Connecticut can become a state in which all people are heard, are treated fairly, can meet their basic needs, and have equal opportunities to thrive.

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## VALUES

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### **At Connecticut Legal Services, we believe in**

- Justice— We know all people are worthy of respect, compassion, fair treatment, and equal opportunity.
- Excellence— We strive to deliver high-quality, effective services with integrity and to continually evaluate and improve our work.
- Empowerment— We believe in the power of self-advocacy and strive to foster that skill in our clients and the communities we serve.
- Racial Equity— We strive to achieve and maintain racially equitable practices internally and in our services and interactions.
- Commitment— We understand that achieving our mission requires the unyielding commitment of our staff and board to our clients, to our work, and to one another.

### **CLS Helps Abused Woman and Her Children Find Safety**

A local domestic violence shelter referred Elena\* to Connecticut Legal Services. She started a divorce action against her husband and needed help getting full and sole custody of their one-year-old child. In addition to mental and emotional abuse, Elena suffered numerous beatings throughout her marriage. She had her husband arrested when he turned his violence against their children. He attacked Elena's five-year-old son and their one-year-old son, breaking 13 of the boys' ribs. Elena's husband faces charges of assault, risk of injury to a minor, and first-degree assault with extreme indifference to life. Elena's CLS attorney represented her in the divorce proceeding and ensured that restraining and protective orders were in place. Elena obtained a divorce, full and sole custody of their child, and financial support for herself and her children.

*\*Names and identifying information in CLS client stories were changed to protect client confidentiality.*



# Service Area, Offices, and Staff

In the CLS service area—all of Connecticut except the Greater Hartford and New Haven areas—more than 200,000 people are financially eligible for services (2010 census).

CLS has six full-service offices, two satellite offices, and one administrative office.

On June 30, 2019, the CLS staff consisted of

49.95 FTE lawyers

2.00 FTE paralegals

11.80 FTE legal assistants

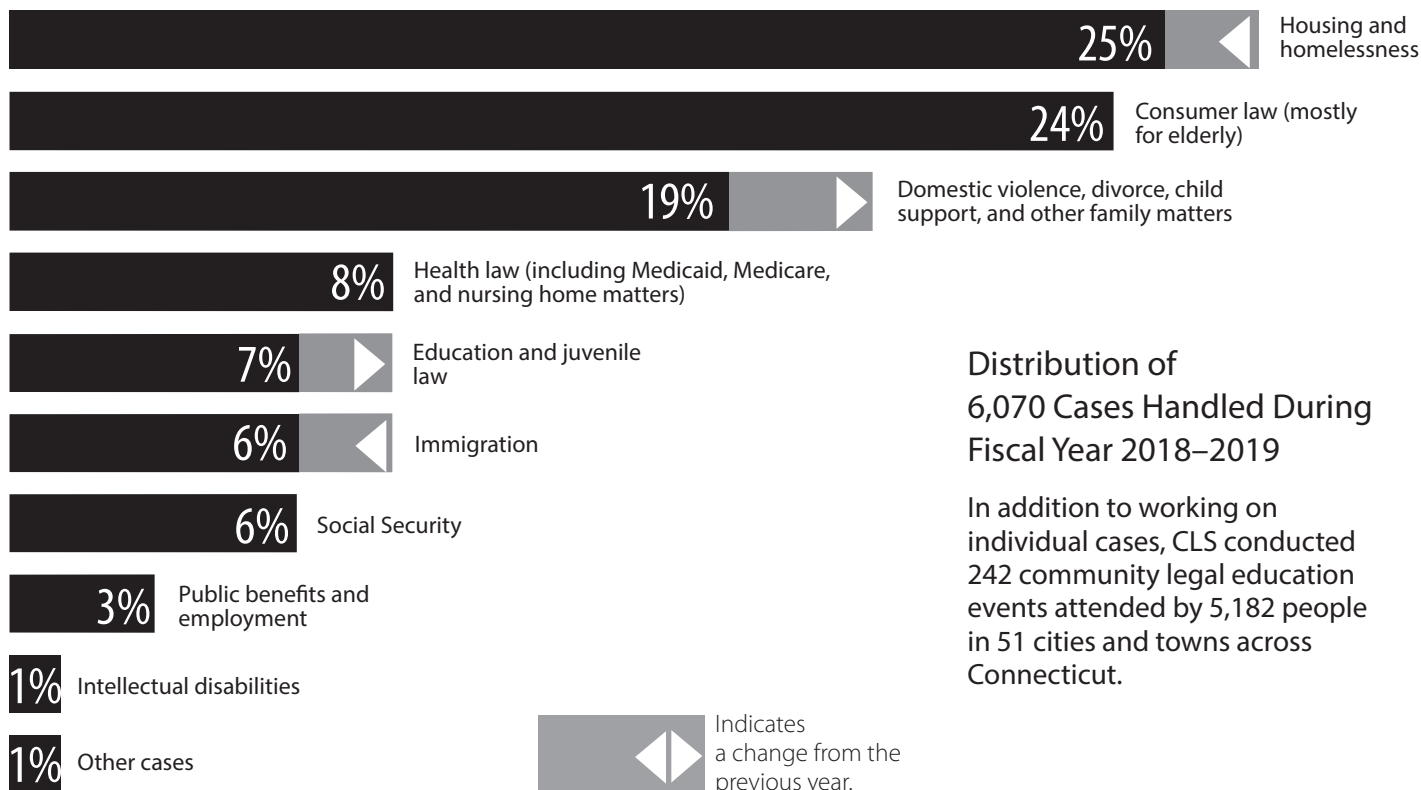
.55 FTE child welfare advocates

10.00 FTE administrative staff.



## Distribution of Cases

In 2018–2019, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 16,912 requests for service. We responded by opening 3,895 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 2,175 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 6,070 cases benefited approximately 13,997 members of low-income households.



### Distribution of 6,070 Cases Handled During Fiscal Year 2018–2019

In addition to working on individual cases, CLS conducted 242 community legal education events attended by 5,182 people in 51 cities and towns across Connecticut.

# 2018–2019 Board of Directors and Advisory Council

## Officers

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## Advisory Council

### Officers

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Jay Malcynsky, Esq.—Partner: Gaffney, Bennett & Associates, Inc.

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Leslie O'Brien—Director of Constituent Services: Senate Democrats

Margaret Sweetland Patricelli—Simsbury, Conn.

Mitchell Pearlman, Esq.—Government Information Consultant; Former Executive Director: Freedom of Information Commission

James T. Shearin, Esq.—Partner: Pullman & Comley LLC

Paul Slager, Esq.—Partner: Silver Golub & Teitell, LLP

Richard Slavin, Esq.—Partner: Cohen and Wolf, P.C.

Stanley Twardy Jr., Esq.—Partner: Day Pitney LLP

## 2018–2019 Chief Office Personnel

Deborah R. Witkin

Executive Director

Anne Louise Blanchard

Deputy Director

Nilda R. Havrilla

Litigation and Advocacy Director

Keith Boyce

Financial Director

Astrid Lebron

Director of Development

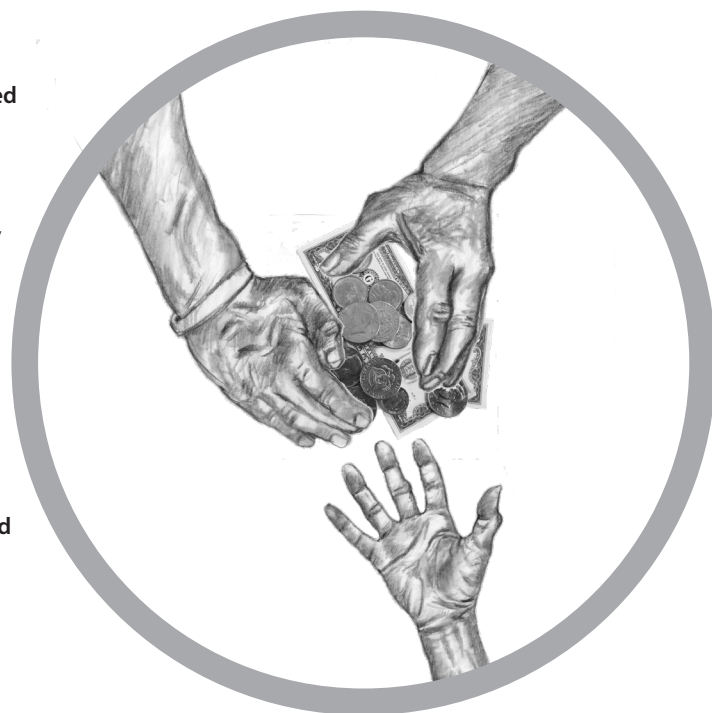
Whit Freer

Information Technology Administrator

## CLS Helps Employee Get Benefits She Needs

Margie, a desperately poor Haitian woman who speaks little English, worked as a health care aide. When she lost her job at a nursing home, she started collecting a small amount of unemployment compensation. About ten months later, she received a letter from the Department of Labor (DOL) stating that it had overpaid her by several thousand dollars. The DOL demanded that she return the amount of the overpayment and pay a hefty penalty. The agency informed Margie that it would deduct the amount owed from future unemployment payments, which meant she would not have enough money to pay her rent or buy food. She requested a hearing that she and her daughter attended. It was found that the overpayment was not Margie's fault, and the penalty was removed. However, DOL required that she return the overpayment.

Margie's request for a waiver of repayment was denied. The law allows the DOL to waive repayment of overpayments if the overage was not the fault of the recipient and if the recipient's income is below the poverty level. Margie met both conditions. Desperate, she and her daughter turned to Connecticut Legal Services. Her CLS attorney represented Margie at a DOL hearing, and the waiver was granted. In addition, Margie was able to keep the small amount of unemployment compensation to which she was entitled. That benefit enabled Margie to pay her living expenses while she looked for another job.



# Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your commitment to the community we serve. Together, we protect critical civil legal rights and make the world a more just and equitable place for those struggling to access justice, despite the challenges of poverty and serious life issues.

In 2018–2019, Connecticut Legal Services developed a four-year strategic plan to provide a strong and vibrant road map to our future. We used the planning process as an opportunity to reflect, refine, and recommit ourselves to CLS' mission, vision, and values while focusing on the needs and opportunities of today and tomorrow. We use the goals and strategies in our plan to deepen our work, reinforce our infrastructure, and collaborate and build partnerships in ways that will have an even greater impact on those we serve.

In addition, we re-energized our communications efforts to better reflect our dynamic work. We enhanced our website, increased our social media presence, and updated our look, as the design of this 2018–2019 Annual Report shows.

These efforts enhance our work as a state leader in providing access to justice through individual and systemic advocacy. As a private, nonprofit organization, we rely on your partnership as we work to remove barriers to justice and opportunity for low-income people in crisis.

Finally, as the COVID-19 pandemic heightens challenges to our clients and staff, we want to assure our friends that CLS continues to focus on helping clients navigate the additional pandemic related challenges they face.

Thank you for your support of our mission.

Sincerely,



*Deborah  
Witkin*

Deborah R. Witkin  
Executive Director, CLS



*Ann G. Taylor*

Ann G. Taylor  
Chair, CLS Board of Directors



# Financial Supporters and Other Income Sources for 2018–2019

## Government-Based Grants

	<i>Support</i>
Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$ 50,559
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area	48,646
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area	52,118
City of Middletown	10,000
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury	10,280
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield	3,696
Park City Communities	44,114
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division—Family Matters Training Program	11,000
State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services	90,752
State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services	109,652
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services	689,113
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch	111,241
State of Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program	8,291
State of Connecticut Nonprofit Grant Program	139,165
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender	106,687
State of Connecticut Office of Victim Services	1,629,207
Town of Ashford	1,000
Town of Coventry	500
Town of Ellington	2,200
Town of Groton	7,260
Town of Mansfield	6,500
<b>Total Government-Based Grants</b>	<b>\$ 3,131,981</b>

## Private Grants

	<i>Support</i>
Children's Community Programs of Connecticut	\$ 5,000
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Women & Girls Fund	5,000
Community Foundation of Fairfield County	80,000
Community Foundation of Greater New Britain	10,000

Community Foundation of Middlesex County	3,000
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Bank of America Settlement Funds</i> )	734,053
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Court Fees Grant-in-Aid</i> )	6,528,263
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Interest on Lawyer's Trust Account</i> )	1,707,033
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Judicial Branch Grant-in-Aid</i> )	707,677
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Singer Fellow</i> )	56,250
Connecticut Community Foundation	3,000
Connecticut Health Foundation	75,000
Equal Justice Works Trafficking Victims Protection Act Fellow	54,126
Financial Distress Research Project	466,354
Frank Loomis Palmer Foundation	3,281
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation	500
The Meriden Foundation	10,000
Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation	5,000
St. John's Community Foundation	4,000
Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.	73,255
United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut	16,000
United Way, Greater Waterbury	16,600
United Way, Meriden and Wallingford	21,500
United Way, Northwest Connecticut	3,687
United Way, Southeastern Connecticut	25,690
United Way, Southington	3,150
United Way, West Central Connecticut	3,504
<b>Total Private Grants</b>	<b>\$ 10,620,923</b>

## Donations and Other Income

Campaign for Justice	\$ 298,161
Donated Goods and Services	274,799
Investment Income	31,707
Program Fees	218,716
United Way Donor Designations	9,498
Other Income	702
<b>Total Donations and Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 833,583</b>
<b>Total CLS Income</b>	<b>\$ 14,586,487</b>

# Statements of Financial Position—June 30, 2019, and June 30, 2018

ASSETS	June 30, 2019	June 30, 2018	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	June 30, 2019	June 30, 2018
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Liabilities</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$1,579,508	\$2,400,044	Accrued Pension Liability	\$5,036,631	\$3,645,074
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	\$2,368	\$19,479	Accounts Payable	\$263,599	\$223,237
Short-Term Investments	1,494,751	\$749,430	Accrued Expenses	\$242,136	\$221,165
Receivables			Deferred Revenue	\$11,719	\$585,670
Grants and Contracts Receivable	\$997,345	\$416,002	Accrued Annual Leave	\$488,536	\$472,703
Promises to Give	\$1,778,491	\$1,588,908	Client Trust Deposits	\$2,368	\$19,479
Other Receivables	\$25,971	\$114,157	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$6,044,989</b>	<b>\$5,167,328</b>
Prepaid Expenses	\$116,211	\$114,961	<b>Net Assets</b>		
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$5,994,645</b>	<b>\$5,402,981</b>	Without Donor Restrictions		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			Attributable to operations	\$561,921	\$1,376,985
Property, Equipment, and Software	\$1,728,712	\$1,588,764	Attributable to pension liability	(1,830,386)	(1,430,802)
Leasehold Improvements	\$311,118	\$334,141	Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	(1,268,465)	(\$53,817)
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	\$2,039,830	\$1,922,905	Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$2,151,991	1,156,803
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(\$1,171,998)	(\$1,124,810)	<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$883,526</b>	<b>\$1,102,986</b>
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$867,832</b>	<b>\$798,095</b>	<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$6,928,515</b>	<b>\$6,270,314</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>					
Security Deposits	\$66,038	\$69,238			
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$66,038</b>	<b>\$69,238</b>			
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,928,515</b>	<b>\$6,270,314</b>			

## CLS Helps Grandmother Care for Grandchild

Jack has lived with Wanda, his grandmother, since birth because his mother has a history of violence and mental illness. Jack's mother claimed that she lived with Wanda, was Jack's primary caretaker, and was eligible for state benefits. However, Wanda had Jack's mother taken off the lease months earlier when she moved out and left Jack behind. Both the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) became involved, but Jack's mother refused to tell anyone where she lived. Wanda finally discovered Jack's mother's address and reported it to DSS. Connecticut Legal Services helped Wanda prepare an affidavit detailing all the facts in the case and requested a hearing. Wanda's CLS attorney was able to persuade DSS that Wanda did have physical custody of Jack. DSS reopened the case and granted benefits back to the date that Jack's mother had been taken off the lease. Wanda now receives cash and food assistance to help with the expenses of raising Jack.

As an added benefit, Wanda was eligible for HUSKY A as the caretaker of her grandson. This makes accessing care for her own disability issues much easier. Jack, who now has an individualized education plan because of his autism, has been making tremendous progress in school. Everyone familiar with the situation agrees that Wanda is providing the stability and support that Jack needs.



# Campaign for Justice Contributors

## Partners:

**\$25,000–\$49,999**

Shipman & Goodwin LLP

## Trailblazers:

**\$10,000–\$24,999**

Day Pitney LLP and its partners  
McCarter & English, LLP  
Wiggin & Dana LLP

## Leaders:

**\$5,000–\$9,999**

Cummings & Lockwood LLC  
Finn Dixon & Herling LLP  
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Claire L. Helsing Foundation  
The Ruth Krauss Foundation, Inc.  
James Randel

## Pacesetters:

**\$1,000–\$4,999**

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Gail and Robert A. Bedoukian  
Marvin P. Bellis  
Eryn Ament Bingle  
Anne and Chris Blanchard  
Cacace Tusch & Santagata, Attorneys-at-Law  
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Cohen and Wolf, P.C.

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Nicole Gathy  
Gaballe Family  
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Michael J. Hanley  
Helen Harris  
Sheila Hayre  
Kaye and Hennessey, LLC  
Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder  
Leon N. Lapine Charitable Residuary Trust  
Astrid Lebron  
Leighton, Katz & Drapeau  
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Richard F. Orr  
Jeffrey Plotkin  
Brad Saxton and Anne Harrigan  
Michael Schlessinger and Monica S. Smyth  
The Honorable Joseph M. Shortall and Ms. Sara L. Bernstein  
Mark and Cindy Slane  
Alan R. Spier

Tom and Maria Sullivan Jr.  
Rob and Ann Taylor  
David P. and Lisa W. Tuttle  
Jonathan Winikur  
Deborah Witkin and Israel Ortiz Wofsey, Rosen, Kweskin & Kuriansky, LLP  
The Wu Family  
Elizabeth C. Yen  
Susan and Nels Ylitalo

## Sustainers:

**\$500–\$999**

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Christina E. Clayton  
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The Flood Law Firm  
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Courtland H. Hall  
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Alice Yoakum  
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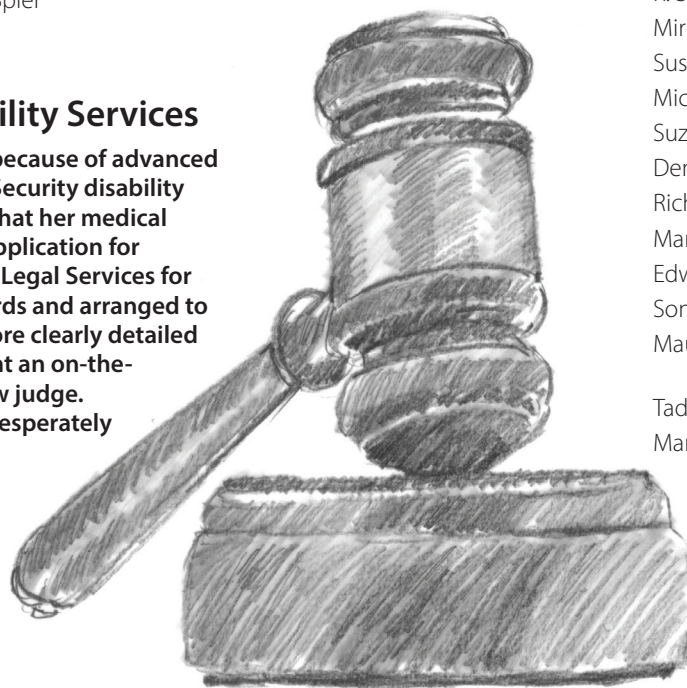
## Patrons:

**\$200–\$499**

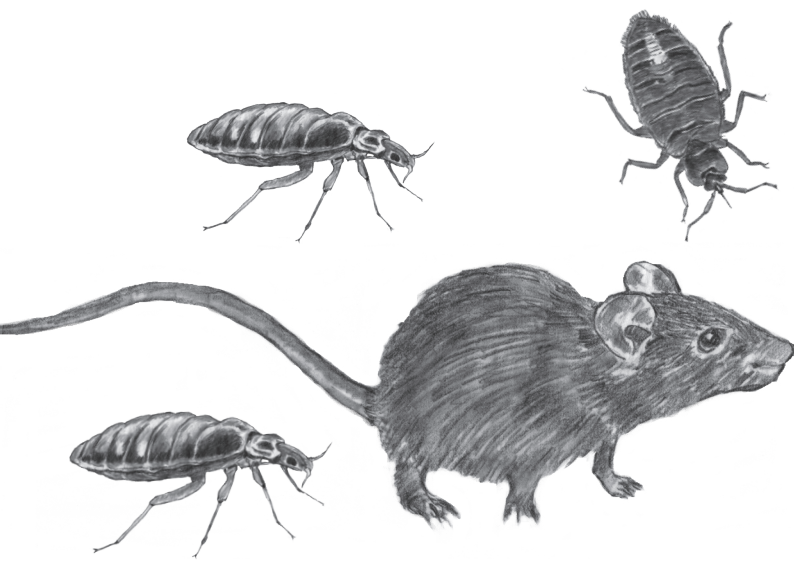
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Sonja M. Devitt  
Maureen Dewan and Stuart C. Belkin  
Tadhg Dooley  
Marianne Barbino Dubuque

## CLS Helps Woman Get Disability Services

**Elia is 54 years old and severely disabled because of advanced Huntington's Disease. She sought Social Security disability benefits but was denied. The SSA stated that her medical records were insufficient to support her application for benefits. Elia was referred to Connecticut Legal Services for help. Her CLS attorney reviewed the records and arranged to obtain additional medical records that more clearly detailed Elia's disabilities. Her attorney then sought an on-the-record decision from an administrative law judge. The judge awarded Elia the benefits she desperately needs and to which she is entitled.**







## CLS Helps Disabled Woman Avoid Homelessness

Teri, a person with disabilities, is the caretaker for her grandchildren and niece. After renting an apartment for 13 years, she complained to her landlord and the health department about problems with mice and bedbugs. Although the health department told the landlord to exterminate, he did not. Instead, he told Teri to get a cat. His refusal to obey the order to exterminate frustrated her, and she decided to use some of the rent money to buy traps and sprays. Her landlord started an eviction action against her for not paying the full amount of rent. During this time, Teri became eligible for a Section 8 voucher. However, an eviction based on nonpayment of rent would have jeopardized that eligibility. She appealed to Connecticut Legal Services, which represented her in the eviction action. We helped Teri obtain a settlement agreement that gave her time to find another place and did not jeopardize her Section 8 eligibility.

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### Supporters: up to \$199

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AmazonSmile, proceeds from  
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LLC

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Susan Handy  
David and Lauren Matte  
Harry and Janice Mazadoorian  
Catherine Mennenga  
Harold and Judith Meyer

# Campaign for Justice continued

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Mickey and Irene Weiss  
Wesleyan ACLU  
A. Thomas White  
Kathleen White  
Michael Witkin  
Dick and Ann Wyles  
Zimmerlin Law LLC  
Virginia and Jeremy Zwelling

*In memory of*  
Roy F. Brown  
Peter Kilby  
Dick McCarthy and Ed McCarthy  
Saul A. Rothman  
A. David Russell  
Judge Angelo Santaniello

Easter and Payton Thomas  
Fred Weisberg  
Paul L. Witkin  
Rev. Henry K Yorkon  
Nancy Zeldes

*In honor/  
appreciation of*  
Robert Adelman, Esq.  
Jean Aranha  
Attorney Kevin Brophy  
The hardworking and dedicated  
CLS staff  
Darien Wellness  
Marvin Farbman  
Judge Joseph Goldberg  
Laurence K. Hoffman, ESQ  
Michael Koskoff  
Jane and Steven's wedding  
Tyreese L. E. Malloy  
The Honorable Robert A. Martin  
Carole A. Master  
Hunter Murdock  
Judge Thomas J. O'Sullivan  
The work of Sydney and Josh  
Perry  
Saul Rothman  
Anne Verrill  
Shannon Wegele

## *In-Kind Gifts and Services*

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Matthew Chambers, Jackson  
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Eric J. Eggen, Eggen Law  
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Karen Hartford, Verrill Dana  
Cory Hohnbaum  
John Houlihan  
Rubina Islam  
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Jeff Plotkin, Finn Dixon & Herling  
Jeffrey Pollock, Fox Rothschild  
Richard Orr  
Henry Su, Constantine  
William Sweeney  
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## CLS Helps Keep Abused Child Safe

**Maria came to Connecticut Legal Services for help obtaining full custody of her nine-year-old daughter, Susie. While staying overnight with her father, she was sexually assaulted on multiple occasions by her 14-year-old half-brother. Susie's father refused to believe her and did nothing to lessen the danger and trauma of forcing Susie to continue to interact with her abuser. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) became involved, and the half-brother was criminally charged for his assaults on Susie. Because of the DCF findings and CLS advocacy, Maria retained sole custody of her daughter. The father no longer has overnight visitation with Susie, and he is forbidden from allowing contact between Susie and her half-brother. She is now safe from abuse, and Maria no longer fears for her daughter's well-being.**

Domenico (Nick) Zaino, Carmody  
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## CLS Helps Elderly Cancer Victim Get Health Care

**Jane is an elderly Asian woman who doesn't speak English. She moved to Connecticut from New York after being evicted from her home because she could not pay the rent and to obtain medical treatment when she was diagnosed with cancer. Jane was in a nursing home, and when she applied for Medicaid benefits, the Department of Social Services (DSS) denied her coverage. The nursing home referred Jane to Connecticut Legal Services for assistance. Jane's CLS attorney discovered that DSS believed that Jane was part owner of a fish market in another state and that income and assets of that fish market should be attributed to her. Jane had been involved with the market many years earlier, but she was not a part owner, and there was no corporate structure or partnership agreement. When Jane became ill, the fish market continued without her, and she didn't receive any income or assets.**

**Jane's CLS attorney secured a translator/interpreter to communicate with Jane. Her attorney also investigated the issue of the fish market, talking to the owner (who does not speak English either), and obtaining and analyzing bank records and tax returns for the business. Through this work, CLS was able to show that Jane did not benefit from the business and convinced DSS that Jane was eligible for and should receive Medicaid assistance. CLS kept Jane from being discharged from the nursing home when she had nowhere else to go and needed help treating her cancer.**



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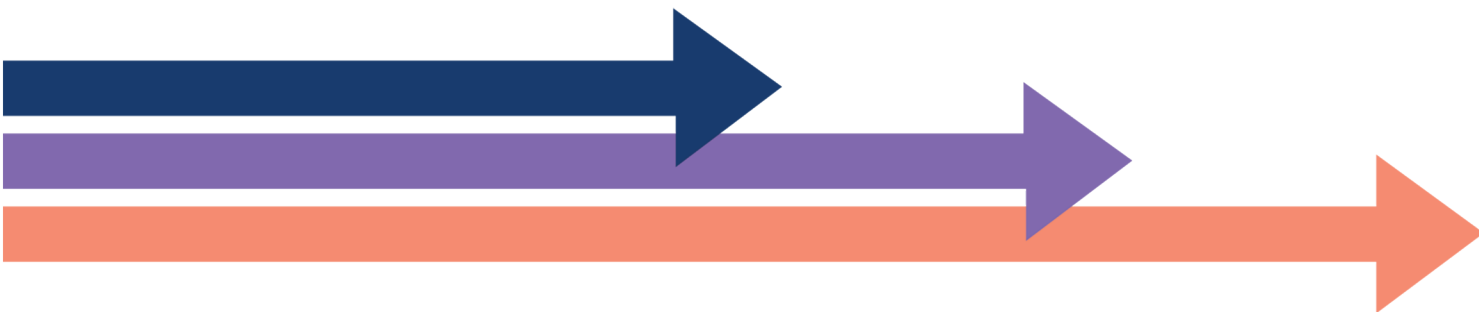
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