



PRO BONO REPORT

Dear Partners,

The commitment and generosity of our law firm and in-house partners, student interns, and volunteers continues to inspire us at Inner City Law Center.

Last year, as the pandemic continued to take a toll on our clients, you continued to step up, donating nearly 15,000 hours to defend against evictions, fight slumlords, help people gain access to benefits, and advocate for healthy homes and tenants' rights.

Your expertise also enabled Inner City Law Center to significantly expand the types of services we provide. Tax attorneys helped formerly homeless clients extinguish debts with the IRS. Trust and estates experts drafted wills and provided end-of-life advice

for elderly clients. Multi-lingual advocates provided vital language skills. And attorneys with expertise in collections helped us and our clients access hard-earned judgments.

Your efforts have a meaningful, lasting, and life-changing impact on the lives of our clients. On behalf of our clients and our staff, we extend our deepest gratitude for your time, your advocacy, and your partnership in the fight to end homelessness.

Warmest regards,

Vidhya Ragunathan, *Director of Pro Bono*
Jazmine Smalley, *Pro Bono Coordinator*
Erin Thompson, *Special Projects Manager*
Grace Buchholz, *Project Fellow*

In 2021, **800+** Volunteers
Provided Nearly **15,000** Hours of Support

Valued At **\$6 Million+**



Getting Clients Back On Their Feet Through Citation Clearing

For an unhoused individual, jaywalking, traffic violations, and other infractions can lead to dire consequences. Inner City Law Center clients who receive citations face large fines and fees, loss of their driver's licenses, and an inability to access housing. Their cars may be repossessed, leaving them with no way to get to a job, and perhaps with no place to sleep for the night.

Last year, dedicated professionals stepped up to convince courts that it was in the interests of justice to

dismiss traffic citations, including for an undocumented, recently-divorced single mother who was homeless with her three children; a young man living in his car while he searched for permanent housing; and a father who had recently gained custody of his daughters but was unable to secure stable employment and housing due to a suspended license. Among others, ***Caleb Bean from Alston & Bird LLP; Jennifer Resnik, Roya Ladan, and Youngbin Son of Cohen Williams LLP; Sam Cate-Gumpert of Davis***

"Too often, fines and penalties associated with traffic citations serve as added barriers to clients' efforts to secure housing and financial stability."

- Youngbin Son
Associate, Cohen Williams LLP

Wright Tremaine LLP; and Kelly Stephan of Flynn Restaurant Group jumped in and successfully advocated for clearing major barriers to housing and financial security for these clients.

Using Technology to Ensure Housing Stability

Among other things, the pandemic created numerous challenges for clients with physical and mental health issues and resulted in an ever-evolving landscape of housing law. This in turn required Inner City Law Center to adapt quickly to serve low-income tenants in need. In 2021, Inner City Law Center responded to these needs by launching our first-ever fully-virtual housing clinic. A group of pro bono attorneys wasted no time in helping get the clinic up and running. ***Adrienne Directo, Crystal Caldera, JT Martinez, and Sarah Choi of Cooley LLP; Alison Weinberg-***

Fahey, Lillian Levy, Loni Gonzalez, Michael Olsen, Poloma Larson, Sarah Gettings, Sean Kiernan, and Tara Shabahang of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP; Michelle McCarthy of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP; and Alice Hodsden, Cindy Lee, and Samantha Burdick of Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP quickly became experts on the rules surrounding evictions during the pandemic. They utilized available technology and counseled vulnerable tenants, drafted cease and desist letters to

unscrupulous landlords, helped clients obtain rental assistance, and assisted tenants with filing habitability complaints. Thanks to their passionate advocacy, adaptability, and willingness to do whatever it took to ensure clients received help from the safety of their homes, dozens of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable residents remained housed.



Removing Financial Obstacles to Housing

Financial stability is essential for housing stability. Over the last few years, attorneys with expertise in tax law have become an integral part of our pro bono program and allow Inner City Law Center to provide our clients more holistic services. These volunteers use their expertise to help evaluate the tax liabilities of chronically homeless Angelenos and negotiate with the IRS to decrease or waive the debts altogether.

Among others, *Svetlana Brontveyn from Alana Tax Group; Kami LaBerge, Stephen Turanchik, Amy Lawrence, and Felicia L. Holley from Paul Hastings LLP; Steve Boulanger from the Walt Disney Company; Michael Desmond and George Liang from Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP; and James Molen from Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger LLP* helped Inner City Law Center clients obtain or retain stable housing and healthcare without the burden of a heavy tax debt hanging over their heads.

Fighting for Safe and Affordable Housing

In 2019, Inner City Law Center retained six long-term tenants who resided in a multi-story, rent-stabilized building in South Central Los Angeles that was plagued by a multitude of issues, including roach, bedbug, and rodent infestations, clogged plumbing, leaking showers and sinks, defective smoke detectors, broken windows and floors, and repeated harassment from newer tenants. The Housing Department had already issued several violations for the building.

Without hesitation, *Jon Dean from McDermott Will & Emory LLP* stepped up to litigate the case with our office. His team, including *Irene Le, Brett Meyerhoff, Cecilia Choy, Regina Hunter, and Leia Espericueta*, dove in, established trust with the clients, and began fighting to get better living conditions for the tenants.

After two years of tirelessly drafting pleadings, filing and opposing motions, and engaging with experts, the McDermott and Inner City Law Center teams achieved an amazing settlement that included both a monetary recovery for the clients as well as requiring the landlord to repair the units. Thanks to the dedication shown by McDermott, the clients now have a safe and healthy place to call home.



Successfully Litigating Cases of New Impression to Protect Families

Last year, Inner City Law Center began representing a client who had fallen behind financially due to COVID-19. The landlord refused to accept rent from a rental assistance program and instead repeatedly harassed our client and her children. He filed an eviction case against her and also obtained a small claims court judgment against her.

"Our team won an appeal of first impression preventing landlords from suing tenants in the small claims courts during the COVID eviction moratorium. We were elated to win that fight for our client, and for others affected by this decision."

- Henry Leung, Donna Garlow, Uri Niv, and Nathaniel Wood
Crowell & Moring LLP

Recognizing that this client and her children were at extreme risk of falling into homelessness, *Henry Leung, Donna Garlow, Uri Niv, and Nathaniel Wood from Crowell & Moring LLP* came on board. They swiftly drafted a compelling legal brief highlighting critical errors in the commissioner's interpretation of the law in order to overturn the small claims court ruling. The appellate court agreed and issued a writ ordering the small claims court to cancel its judgment against our client and established important precedent for others facing a similar risk of losing their homes. Thanks to Crowell's tireless enthusiasm to pursue justice in this case, our client and her children remain housed and can breathe a sigh of relief.

Serving Those Who Served Our Country

Since 2017, the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles (WLALA) Foundation has sponsored law students to intern with Inner City Law Center's Homeless Veterans Project. During the summer of 2021, *Galyn Sumida-Ross from UCLA School of Law* and *Leilani Stacy from USC Gould School of Law* worked alongside Inner City Law Center attorneys to assist survivors of military sexual trauma and women veterans facing and/or experiencing homelessness. Galyn and Leilani reviewed clients' medical and military records, drafted briefs seeking disability

and other vital benefits, and advocated for discharge upgrades and other relief that would put our clients on the path to a safe and stable life.

Commemorating Operation Desert Storm

Last November, Inner City Law Center hosted our Fourth Annual Weekend to End Homelessness. In honor of the 30th anniversary of Operation Desert Storm, the event focused on veteran homelessness in Los Angeles County. More than 185 people attended a virtual workshop series that provided key information to veterans seeking resources and an overview of trauma-informed lawyering for pro bono partners.

Getting Vital Resources to Vulnerable Angelenos

Homeful.LA, Inner City Law Center's volunteer and advocacy portal, mobilized community support to provide basic resources to Angelenos experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In 2021, Homeful.LA's volunteer army, consisting of students, business owners, educators, and Angelenos from all walks of life, assembled and distributed: 5,250 hygiene kits with toiletries and PPE to our unhoused neighbors; more than 250 backpacks with school supplies to children facing housing instability; and more than 250 holiday gifts to families in need.



"It takes time for justice to be served through the courts. In the meantime, we organize volunteers and donors to take care of clients' basic immediate needs in the form of hygiene-kit, back-to-school, and pet-care drives."

- Erin Thompson

Special Projects Manager, Inner City Law Center



2021 Pro Bono Heroes

Alana Tax Group
Alston & Bird LLP
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Arent Fox LLP
Baker McKenzie
Blank Rome LLP
Cohen Williams LLP
Constangy Brooks, Smith & Prophete LLP
Cooley LLP
Crowell & Moring LLP
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Dentons
DLA Piper
Durie Tangri
Flynn Restaurant Group
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Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP
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The Judge Law Firm ALC
Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP
The Walt Disney Company

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JOIN US & TAKE ACTION

Volunteer partners are vital to Inner City Law Center and our clients. We need you, your support, and your advocacy! Contact us to learn more about pro bono, volunteer, and internship opportunities.

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