2017 REPORT

THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

MARYLAND TENANTS FILE CLASS ACTION AGAINST WESTMINSTER MANAGEMENT TO STOP ILLEGAL FEE COLLECTION PRACTICES

MARYLAND SUSPENSION REPRESENTATION PROJECT LAUNCHES TO HELP KIDS STAY IN SCHOOL

WELCOME, K’SHAANI AND SARAH! IT’S TIME TO DEMAND #WATERFORALL

PUBLIC JUSTICE CENTER STATEMENT ON DACA ANNOUNCEMENT

TODAY IN A CRUEL MOVE, THE ADMINISTRATION RESCINDED THE DACA (DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS)

STATE COURTS CANNOT “RUBBERSTAMP A LANDLORD’S DECISION TO EVICT”

PJC AND ALLIES CHALLENGE POLICE WHO STOP-AND-FRISK WHEN PEOPLE RUN IN A “HIGH-CRIME AREA”

“You Didn’t Sue Fast Enough” Is No Excuse Court of Appeals Says Companies Can’t Put Unreasonable Limits on Consumers’ Access to the Courts

Baltimore City Police Sued for Unlawful Arrests and Harsh Detention of Protesters

Court of Appeals Shoots Down Harassing Debt Collection Practices

UNITED NOT BLIGHTED RALLY CALLS FOR BALTIMORE TO INVEST IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING, NEW JOBS, GREEN SPACE

CHALLENGING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL NEW PJC PROJECT AIDS TO MAKE EDUCATION MORE EQUITABLE FOR KIDS

GOVERNOR HOGAN VETOES EARNED PAID SICK DAYS IN MARYLAND

THE DECISION WILL LEAVE 750,000 MARYLANDERS WITHOUT ACCESS TO EARNED PAID SICK DAYS

REVISED - VOTE NO TO SPEEDING UP EVICTIONS IN MARYLAND

THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES THE HEALTHY WORKING FAMILIES ACT, SENDING THE BILL TO GOVERNOR HOGAN’S DESK

A PROFILE OF GENEROSITY: LEAH AND BEN SPERO

TELL SEN. ZIRKIN: IT’S TIME TO REFORM RENT COURT!

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES HAS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY TO SUPPORT HB 1487.

COURT DECISION WILL MAKE IT HARDER FOR DEBT BUYERS TO ABUSE CONSUMERS

URGENT ACTION NEEDED: URGE YOUR SENATOR TO VOTE YES ON SB 705!

CALL THESE SENATORS NOW TO STOP SB 983! SB 983 THREATENS BAIL REFORM AS AMENDED BY A RELATIVELY SMALL MAJORITY OF SENATORS

LAST NIGHT, SENATE BILL 983 WAS APPROVED AS AMENDED BY A RELATIVELY SMALL MAJORITY OF SENATORS

THE VOLUNTEER KEEPS TENANTS IN THEIR HOMES

8:45 ON WEDNESDAY MORNING. THE LOBBY OUTSIDE OF THE BALTIMORE CITY RENT COURT IS PACKED WITH...

WAGE THEFT FROM CARE PROVIDERS: WORKERS SUIT FOR UNPAID MINIMUM AND OVERTIME WAGES

THE PUBLIC JUSTICE CENTER STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND OTHER COMMUNITIES

MOTHER CHALLENGES TERMINATION OF HOUSING BENEFITS

BRIEF ARGUES LOCAL HOUSING AGENCY VIOLATED HER DUE PROCESS RIGHTS

DRYWALL WORKERS’ VICTORY SETS STANDARD FOR HOLDING JOINT EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBLE FOR UNPAID WAGES

EMPLOYERS WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO SKIRT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO EMPLOYEES THROUGH LAYERS OF...

THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

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ABOVE: In March 2017, we collaborated through our JustArts initiative with choreographer/dancer Vincent Thomas and visual artist Joe Reinsel in the Baltimore premiere of “What’s Going On?”
It is no accident that as fear and alienation polarize our country, the wealth and income gap has reached an all-time high and discrimination has become increasingly overt. The rights and support structures that people living in poverty count on are threatened, particularly the Affordable Care Act and the unraveling of legal protections for workers, immigrants, and families.

While the threats are real and increasing, those most surprised are often privileged such that they do not feel the effects of these problems. The day-to-day stress of living in an inhospitable culture has long been the experience of people of color and people living in poverty.

The first step towards addressing this inequity is recognizing that oppression based on race, class, and disadvantaged minorities is historical and has been systemically built into our laws, institutions, and behaviors. We next ask what solutions may be called for, with the knowledge that it is not a simple matter of providing more benefits, or of “fixing” people. It is more about widening our circles of care to include people we were raised to think of as “others.” For those in positions of privilege, it is about using that privilege to open doors and get disadvantaged people at the tables from which they have been excluded. Then we might have justice.

We are proud to say that the Public Justice Center’s mission of “pursuing systemic change to build a just society” is as relevant now as it was when we were founded in 1985. We have been about systemic impact from the get go, and we will continue to be.

Throughout this report, we highlight injustices that people suffer every day, and describe how we take on the systems that perpetuate those injustices so we can effectively reverse the situation for hundreds, even millions of people.

We are never alone. Your contribution keeps the lights on and pays the dedicated staff who create powerful, lasting change. Partnerships with community-based organizations help us identify issues and collaborate in reform campaigns. Our Litigation Partnership provides a rich source of private lawyers to co-counsel our cases. We are leaders in coalitions that take on legislative agendas such as the Working Matters coalition that, after five years, passed Maryland’s first earned sick days legislation.

Lawyers have an important role to play in these times. Indeed, the judiciary is now our best and last line of defense. Many good laws are still on the books and need to be enforced. Even in a hostile environment, we can make the most of laws telling employers they must pay their workers for work done, laws telling landlords they must comply with health and safety laws and due process in court, laws protecting people against retaliation for defending their rights, and so many others.

Thank you. We are in this together for the long haul.

John Nethercutt
Executive Director

Greg Care
President, Board of Directors
The Appellate Advocacy Project

The Appellate Advocacy Project staffed by the Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr. Appellate Advocacy Fellow, uses appellate courts to advance progressive law reform. This year, we filed briefs or received decisions in cases arguing:

Federal law does not preempt state law that requires judges to review landlords’ claims before approving an eviction.

Tenants are entitled to procedural due process protections before a local public housing agency can terminate their housing benefits.

Consumers’ rights to meaningful recourse against illegal debt collection practices.

Protection for condominium unit owners from illegal and harassing collection tactics used by condominium associations to collect allegedly past-due condominium assessments.

The right of competent, involuntarily committed individuals to make their own medical decisions.

The right of parents in same-sex relationships who do not have a biological or adoptive relationship with their children to be considered their parents under the law.

Consumers’ rights to bring suit despite unilateral clauses contracting away those rights in service contract fine print.

Low-wage employees’ access to competent counsel in cases against employers for failure to compensate for overtime wages.

Individuals’ rights to be free from unlawful search and seizure.
“Her story was a stark reminder of just how high the cards are stacked against someone without the privilege of education, money or connections.”
—Anthony May

ANTHONY MAY
served as the 2016-2017 Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr. Appellate Advocacy Fellow. Prior to the Public Justice Center, Anthony clerked on the Maryland Court of Special Appeals for the Honorable Deborah Sweet Eyler from 2015 to 2016. He graduated cum laude from the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law in 2015, where he served as the Executive Symposium Editor on the Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender and Class and participated as a semi-finalist in the regional American Bar Association Section of Labor and Employment Law Trial Advocacy Competition. Anthony graduated summa cum laude from the University of Akron in 2011, receiving a bachelor’s degree in Political Science. He was born and raised in Akron, Ohio.

Appreciative of the Fellowship’s broad mandate, on-the-ground experience and level of responsibility that comes with this unique position, Anthony would love to see this type of training for every young lawyer. And while he describes many memorable aspects from his year with the Appellate Advocacy Project, one case especially will stick with him for a long time to come. His client was a single mother with two children with disabilities who was fighting to protect her family’s home. “Her story was a stark reminder of just how high the cards are stacked against someone without the privilege of education, money or connections,” Anthony says. “There is a devastating, crippling effect on a family when their stable housing is threatened.”

www.murnaghanfellowship.org
The Education Stability Project

The Education Stability Project works to advance equity in public education by eliminating barriers to school enrollment and success confronting black and brown children, homeless children, children in out-of-home care and other historically excluded and underserved student populations.

We provide training and individual advocacy to enforce federal and state laws that promote education stability and continuity. We conduct outreach and represent individual students facing suspension, expulsion, and forced transfers in school districts throughout Maryland with high or racially disproportionate suspension rates.

THIS YEAR, WE:

Represented dozens of individual students who suffered barriers to their enrollment in school or educational success because they had unstable housing.

Submitted comments urging Maryland to take an expansive and effective approach to protecting homeless students in the State’s Every Student Succeeds Act plan.

Investigated the causes of racial inequities in access to education.

Expanded the scope of the project to explore and create systemic solutions that will correct the overuse of punitive disciplinary measures and school pushout.

Began representing students facing suspensions, expulsions, and forced transfers, and conducting outreach and helping to shape policy on school pushout.
WHEN RENUKA REGE GRADUATED FROM HARVARD LAW SCHOOL IN 2016, she received a fellowship which allowed her to investigate causes of and develop strategies for addressing race-based inequities in access to education and educational outcomes. In September, she joined lead attorney Monisha Cherayil in advocating for students through the PJC’s Education Stability Project. Renuka gathered information from many sources to better understand the most significant issues facing children and youth of color in Maryland public schools and to investigate how a legal advocate like the PJC could best instigate reform. One overarching problem she identified is “school pushout,” or the combination of factors that prevent or discourage youth from staying on track to complete their education. This is driven by several forces: 1) Suspension and expulsion: especially the overuse of these punitive disciplinary measures and their disproportionate application to children of color. 2) Transfers to alternative schools: especially given the poor quality of alternative schools and the bleak outcomes for students who are transferred to them. 3) Lack of positive school climates: especially the lack of effective communication and strong relationships between teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

There are many underlying causes of student behaviors or conflict between students and school staff that result in school pushout, including unidentified disabilities, trauma and other mental health issues, academic difficulties, and institutional racism in schools. Likewise, there are various solutions that schools can implement to address these underlying causes and stem the problems of suspension, expulsion, transfers to alternative schools, and the lack of positive school climates.

Renuka’s research informed our next steps. In September 2017, the Education Stability Project launched the Maryland Suspension Representation Project in collaboration with Disability Rights Maryland, the Office of the Public Defender and the University of Maryland School of Law’s Youth, Education and Justice Clinic. Through this project, the PJC and its partners will provide free advice and representation to youth and their parents in suspension and expulsion cases statewide, as well as in situations when students are sent home from school without an official suspension or forced to transfer to another school for disciplinary reasons.
The Access to Health & Public Benefits Project

The Access to Health & Public Benefits Project advocates to protect and expand access to sufficient health care coverage, needed safety net services, and to appropriate, affordable, effective and culturally competent health care. An explicit goal of this project is to promote racial equity by finding strategies that work to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care outcomes and access to safety net services benefits. In addition to working to defend and preserve the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid funding this year, we:

FILED AND SETTLED A DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT on behalf of five Deaf plaintiffs against Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Health Systems Corporation, alleging discrimination in failure to provide reasonable accommodations for Deaf consumers of medical services. This case was co-counseled through our Litigation Partnership with Eisenberg & Baum, LLP.
ADVOCATED WITH OUR ALLIES in the Maryland Alliance for the Poor to encourage the Maryland General Assembly to increase the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) benefit for the first time since 2002. TDAP offers temporary funds to qualified recipients that have a short-term disability or are waiting for long-term federal disability benefits. The increase of $10 brings the monthly benefit to $195.

SUPPORTED A PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY BILL, led by Health Care for All. Prompted by outrage over the skyrocketing costs of EpiPens, the bill would have required pharmaceutical companies to explain their pricing of prescription drugs. The legislation that ultimately passed gave the Attorney General of Maryland the authority to sue pharmaceutical companies for price gauging.

WORKED WITH THE MARYLAND HEALTH BENEFITS EXCHANGE to improve language access. With the implementation of the new rules and accompanying policies we fought for, we noticed a marked improvement in the most recent open enrollment period. Among the changes is improved online access for Spanish speakers. The call center for the Exchange has improved their procedures and created better policies. Call center employees also have greater knowledge on how to access language interpretation when necessary.

TRAINED IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS to counter the fears that their clients may have about accessing services and whether doing so may adversely impact their immigration status.

WE ALSO CO-HOSTED AUTHOR MARY OTTO in a public event featuring her new book, Teeth: The Story of Beauty, Inequality, and Oral Health in America. Ms. Otto, a journalist, began writing this powerful book after she reported on the death of Deamonte Driver, a young PJC client who died from a tooth infection ten years ago. Mr. Driver’s death spurred widespread dental policy reform in Maryland and across the nation.

CAMILLA ROBERSON As we went to press, we lost our beloved co-worker Camilla Roberson. Camilla led our Access to Health and Benefits Project, scoring many victories to improve access to care for thousands of low-income Marylanders. She compelled the State to eliminate a backlog of applications for Medicaid on the basis of disability and to start processing applications on time. She ensured that dental and health care providers arrange for interpreters for Deaf clients. She organized state agencies, advocates, and providers to make sure that language is not a barrier to receiving public benefits and health care. As a member of the Workplace Justice Project, she worked to make sure that the Unpaid Wage Lien Law would be a tool for workers to recover their unpaid wages. She was also a champion of incorporating race equity into the work of the PJC and the Maryland Alliance for the Poor, a statewide coalition of anti-poverty advocates.
The Human Right to Housing Project

Seeks the realization of a human right to housing that is fair, affordable, habitable, and accessible with security of tenure and cultural adequacy. We bring strategic lawsuits to challenge landlord abuses and protect the rights of tenants facing the threat of eviction or suffering deplorable housing conditions. We encourage tenant organizing and leadership development through targeted deployment of housing advocacy and partnerships with grassroots advocates. We support inclusionary and affordable housing, land trusts, and the involvement of impacted communities.

“There is no way I would have been able to navigate the Baltimore legal system without you!”

—Ms. Valentine, a tenant client
JOHN P. SARBANES COURAGE AWARD:
We are pleased to present the 2017 John P. Sarbanes Courage Award to Matthew Losak and the Montgomery County Renters’ Alliance. In constantly challenging the status quo through organizing, legislation, and litigation, Mr. Losak and MCRA have built a renter-led movement and achieved a measure of justice and equity that is unparalleled for renters in Montgomery County and throughout Maryland. MCRA was instrumental in recent legislative and litigation victories in Montgomery County that will provide renters greater housing stability, protection from retaliation, and transparency and accountability in landlord billing practices.

WON A COURT OF APPEALS ruling that a tenant may defend against a landlord’s eviction action for failure to pay rent by withholding rent and paying it to the Court when the landlord has failed to repair serious defects on the property.

FORCED A MAJOR LANDLORD TO STOP CHARGING TENANTS ILLEGAL FEES under threat of eviction with a class action that resulted in over $718,000 in debt reduction, rent credits, and other monetary compensation.

LED AN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN to reform the law and practices at Rent Court following the release of our report Justice Diverted: How Renters are Processed by the Baltimore City Rent Court.

PARTNERED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN HOUSING FOR ALL BALTIMORE to draft legislation creating an Affordable Housing Trust Fund for Baltimore City and gathered more than 18,000 petition signatures to place the Trust Fund on the ballot, which was approved by voters in November 2016.

CO-HOSTED WITH HOMELESS PERSONS REPRESENTATION PROJECT a public event featuring MacArthur Foundation Fellow Matthew Desmond, whose best-selling book Evicted describes the impact of eviction on people living in low-income neighborhoods.

ADVOCATED FOR THE BALTIMORE HOUSING ROUNDTABLE’S 20/20 CAMPAIGN in Baltimore City, which calls for significant new public investment in living wage jobs, vacant deconstruction and permanently affordable housing.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MATT HILL, Lead Attorney, Human Right to Housing Project.
Matt was honored by Baltimore Neighborhoods Incorporated. Together, with our allies Antonia Fasanelli (Homeless Persons Representation Project) and Odette Ramos (Community Development Network of Maryland) he received the 2017 Dickens Warfield Fair Housing Award.
The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel encourages, supports, and coordinates advocacy to expand recognition and implementation of a right to counsel for indigent litigants in basic human needs civil cases. The PJC staffs this coalition, providing the infrastructure and strategic support for nearly 300 participants from 38 states.

While ours is a long-view strategy, the movement is picking up steam. This year, we were excited to support a number of key advancements:
OVER 60 BILLS WERE FILED OVER THE PAST YEAR TO BROADEN THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN CIVIL CASES.

Most notably, a groundbreaking new law in New York City that we worked on over the past three years made the city the first place in the nation to provide a right to counsel in eviction cases. It is supported by an increase in legal aid funding of $93 million over five years. In Washington, DC, the DC Judiciary Committee passed the Expanding Access to Justice Act, a bill we helped to draft that provides over $4 million in new funding for eviction defense. Among the key advocates for the bill were NCCRC participants Beth Harrison (a former Murnaghan Fellow), Eric Angel, Peter Edelman, Nancy Drane, and Jonathan Smith (a former PJC Executive Director).

LITIGATION CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR PART OF OUR STRATEGY. We assisted with victories in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where the high courts recognized a right to counsel for parents in adoption cases and children in termination of parental rights cases, respectively. We are also awaiting decisions in cases we assisted in New Jersey, Ohio, and a federal court regarding the right to counsel in driver’s license suspensions, adoptions, and immigration court, respectively.

THE 2018 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET EARMARKS $4 MILLION TO EXPAND THE NEW YORK IMMIGRANT FAMILY UNITY PROJECT (a groundbreaking public defense program for immigrants facing deportation) so as to provide universal representation statewide in immigration court.

WE SUPPORTED EFFORTS TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHO FACE JAIL for failing to pay fees, fines, or child support, as well as the automatic suspension of driver’s licenses in child support enforcement proceedings. Louisiana will now provide a right to appointed counsel when an indigent defendant is held in contempt for failure to comply with a court-imposed payment plan. We also supported an effort in New Hampshire that resulted in a right to counsel for cases when someone faces incarceration for failure to pay fines or fees.

STAY INFORMED: www.civilrighttocounsel.org/major_developments

“It was a wonderful day!! NCCRC was represented at the press conference where I told the crowd (on its behalf) that national eyes were on NYC as it works to become the first legislative body to provide a RTC [right to counsel] in housing cases, providing national leadership. We got lots of cheers!”

— Catherine Carr, Philadelphia, PA
Our commitment to prisoners’ rights expanded this year as we joined the Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland. We provide legal research and strategic advice in support of the campaign to eliminate or reform money bail bonds in Maryland. The coalition brings together community groups, concerned voters, and policy experts committed to helping Maryland finally achieve a statewide system of pretrial justice that truly keeps communities safe and is free from racial bias and other forms of injustice.

The effort to reform money bail bonds heated up significantly when the Attorney General asked the Judiciary to tie bail to ability to pay. The Court of Appeals agreed and changed the rules, literally putting money bail at the bottom of a judge’s list of mechanisms to secure a defendant’s appearance at an upcoming trial.

The well-heeled and politically powerful bail bond industry mobilized in full force in the 2017 Maryland General Assembly in an attempt to repeal the Court of Appeals rules change. An intense “David vs. Goliath” battle between the industry (which is among the highest contributors to key legislators in our state) and reform-minded advocates ended in a stalemate in Annapolis at the end of the legislative session. This was good news because it allowed the new Judiciary rules to go into effect in the summer.

We expect the fight is far from over.

MONEY BAIL IS BIG BUSINESS IN MARYLAND.

A report from the Office of the Public Defender demonstrated that between 2011 and 2015, the bail bond industry posted an estimated $2.5 billion in corporate bonds. More than $75 million of corporate bail premiums were paid in cases where defendants were ultimately not convicted of a crime. The report also highlighted that the two Baltimore neighborhoods with the highest corporate bond cost are also the city’s poorest neighborhoods. The current system devastates families and places crushing debt on people of color.
“The inadequacies of Maryland’s pretrial system have been thoroughly documented: it is expensive and discriminatory, and it fails to advance the state’s compelling interests in protecting the public or ensuring the defendant’s appearance at trial,” [Attorney General Brian Frosh wrote.] “Jailing people who should otherwise be released because they are unable to pay bail is out of step with state and federal law and with basic concepts of liberty and justice.”

Frosh Calls For Judiciary Rule Tying Bail To Ability To Pay

DAILY RECORD, October 25, 2016

WANT TO KNOW MORE?
Read the Office of the Public Defender’s report, The High Cost of Bail: How Maryland’s Reliance on Money Bail Jails the Poor and Costs the Community Millions, available online at www.opd.state.md.us

STAY INFORMED:
www.safeandjustmd.org/#BailReformMD
The Workplace Justice Project

The Workplace Justice Project partners with low-wage workers, community and labor organizations, and fellow advocates to promote justice and equity in the workplace and in the courts. We litigate in federal and state courts, enabling our clients to stand up to wage theft, recover their unpaid wages, and send a message that bedrock wage laws cannot be violated with impunity. We advocate in the legislature for systemic reforms to strengthen our workplace laws and ensure access to justice for all workers. We work in coalition to improve workplace health and safety by advocating for policies that recognize the human dignity of each worker.
Among other highlights this year, we:

Won a case in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit that adopted a broad definition of “joint employment.” This definition is more consistent with the humanitarian and remedial purposes of the Fair Labor Standards Act and better guarantees that businesses that outsource their essential functions know that they will be liable when their subcontractors then fail to pay minimum wage or overtime.

Brought a series of cases to collect lost wages and damages on behalf of restaurant workers, home care workers, and other low-wage workers.

Worked closely with the Maryland Center on Economic Policy, the National Employment Law Project, and the National Domestic Worker Alliance to use economic analysis to demonstrate that properly compensating home care workers who worked as independent providers through Maryland’s Independent Provider program would not be prohibitively costly and that the State’s analysis overestimated that cost by a factor of ten, resulting in an unsupported and flawed decision to end the program.

**Opposed proposed regulations** issued by the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation that would have made it easier for businesses to deny unemployment insurance by claiming a worker is exempt as an independent contractor.

**Passed the Healthy Working Families Act,** Maryland’s earned sick and safe leave bill in partnership with the Working Matters coalition with a veto-proof majority in both chambers. Unfortunately, Governor Larry Hogan vetoed this important legislation. Overriding the veto will be a high priority in the 2018 General Assembly. Stand with us.

The Workplace Justice Project continues

Thank you

2017 donors

The donors listed here made their gifts between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017, to support the Public Justice Center. Thank you. Your gifts are building a just society. In addition to the donors listed, we recognize and acknowledge those who make contributions through workplace giving campaigns or through Amazon Smile. We might not know your names, but we are thankful for your support of our work.

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CONTINUED
IMAGINE: Your employer refuses to pay you 25% of your salary.

"About 2.4 million workers in the 10 most populous U.S. states are shortchanged more than $8 billion each year because their employers fail to pay the appropriate minimum wage" according to the Economic Policy Institute’s new report, “The Pervasiveness of Wage Theft”. “The average shortfall is $3,300 a year per year-round worker, or about 25 percent of a worker’s earned wages. The lost wages are sufficient enough to send many of these workers and their families deeper into poverty.”

—excerpted from the Public Welfare Foundation’s website.

THE PJC PAYS CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THOSE INDUSTRIES NOTORIOUS FOR IGNORING THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF LOW-WAGE WORKERS.

Over the past few years, we have developed expertise and represented home care workers, a fast-growing sector of this nation’s workforce. The workers are often isolated from others in the field, overscheduled, and making ends meet on paychecks that come up short because of the push for profits. Putting our work into perspective, these lines quoted from “The Future of Work is the Low-Wage Health Care Job” in the July 3, 2017, edition of Vox gave us food for thought:

The poor taking care of the poor are driving the new economy.

One in 10 working black women are employed in direct care; more than a quarter of direct care workers are black women.

The rate of injuries among home care aides is lower than nursing aides but higher than the average for all jobs, and advocacy groups say direct care injuries are vastly underreported.

Agencies can only increase wages and offer fringe benefits like paid time off and sick leave if the government increases Medicaid reimbursement rates.

JOHN P. SARBANES COURAGE AWARD: DENNISE VAUGHN

We are pleased to present the 2017 John P. Sarbanes Courage Award to Dennise Vaughn, a passionate, eloquent spokesperson for the challenges home care workers face. Ms. Vaughn is an experienced home care worker who provided care to an elderly man in his home for between 70 and 100 hours per week. She was injured when lifting her client—and then immediately fired because of her injury. To make matters worse, she learned that the employers never paid her required overtime nor had they been putting money into the worker’s compensation insurance program. We represented Ms. Vaughn in a lawsuit against her employers, who ultimately settled the dispute. When we called her to report on the settlement, she expressed her gratitude but then said: “We’ve got more work to do.” She now partners with our Workplace Justice Project to educate other home care workers and fight with them for better working conditions and wages across the state.
Thank You 2017 DONORS

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This year, we created the Lawyers’ Alliance for the Public Justice Center. Members of this vibrant group are private or public interest attorneys and law students, some of whom are members of the Board of Directors. They raise money through the annual Law Firm Campaign and act as ambassadors for the PJC within their own firms or organizations, within the bar at large, and support the PJC’s mission in a variety of other ways. In its inaugural year, the Lawyers’ Alliance exceeded its fundraising goals, hosted several interesting events and planted seeds for many new relationships within the legal community.

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The following information was prepared from end of year (June 30, 2017) financial statements prior to the completion of the annual independent audit.

Your generosity this year put the Public Justice Center in an excellent financial position and afforded us the flexibility to sustain our mission. We started the fiscal year with a budget projecting a deficit of $89,075. Over the course of the year, we not only closed the deficit but added another $167,975 "profit." This was because of stronger than projected individual and law firm giving, foundation support, and attorney fee earnings. Thank you.

The Public Justice Center, Inc. is a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of Maryland. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Copies of current financial statements are available upon request by contacting the Public Justice Center at One North Charles Street, Suite 200, Baltimore, MD 21201 or by telephone: (410)625-9409. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of copying and postage.
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THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE 21
We found this visual reminder of our commitment to building a just society at the rally for Baltimore Housing Roundtable’s 20/20 Campaign. (page 9)