“She is a client standing alone in a courtroom where her parenting skills and her child’s care and custody are all being challenged, and everyone else but her either is a lawyer or has a lawyer.”
Letter to Our Supporters

As we write this report to you, it is obvious that your support accomplishes real results. You are so important. You are the donor who can choose to support any number of good causes and who chooses to stand with us and the vision we pursue.

Thank you.

We don’t take your support for granted. In fact, supporting us probably isn’t the easiest choice in your charitable decisions. We don’t work for or with so-called ‘darlings of society.’ Our clients are courageous people who step up even though they are carrying far more than their fair share of the burden. They are the ones who are most vulnerable to economic swings, and who face barriers based on their race and class. They seek to protect and preserve their own rights, yes, but also the rights of many—often thousands—of others. In a society that makes it easy to exploit disadvantaged people and quick to blame them for their poverty rather than address the systemic issues (such as no jobs or low-paying, part-time jobs, unequal access to education, lack of affordable housing or access to the judicial system), our clients courageously step forward. They are vocal. Persistent. Often outraged. Not always popular.

And you stand with them when you support the PJC.

This year, as our nation remembered the 50th anniversary of President Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” we asked how far we have come. The Maryland Alliance for the Poor, in which the Public Justice Center participates, released its 2014 Maryland Poverty Profiles, which states that in the wealthiest state in the country, one in ten Marylanders lives below the poverty line—including 17% of children.

We are making progress! A qualified yes. Sometimes we are leading the charge to change systems that perpetuate inequity; sometimes we are playing defense to preserve what rights we still have. Larger forces create the environment in which we live, including the economy and structural systems that often provide an opportunity or create a barrier based on race and class. Things are changing, maybe not as fast as some would like, but we know that our mission is not easily achieved in the short run and that it is a marathon we are running. In this report, you’ll read about some of the victories—“stepping stones to justice”—that are part of our long-range strategies.

Our approach is effective—as you will read in the pages of this report. If you have questions, call us. We’ll love to talk with you more.

Thank you. You make this powerful work possible. Every single bit of it. Please stick with us.

Sincerely,

John Nethercutt
Executive Director

Tom Glancy
Board President, 2014-15

How is your contribution taking action? Over the past 12 months, our staff of 20 has:

- Engaged in 161 major impact cases or matters, including 98 at the trial level, 29 appellate cases, 58 administrative advocacy actions, 26 coalition or public education campaigns, and 49 legislative bills.
- Provided legal services to 959 new clients, primarily for tenants who are facing eviction or health and safety threats to their housing, tenants who are being evicted because of their landlord’s foreclosure, workers who have not been paid the wages they earned, and homeless students seeking access to public schools.
- Facilitated or served as leaders in major advocacy coalitions including the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, Governor’s Task Force on Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, Rental Housing Coalition, Tenants in Foreclosure Workgroup, Medicaid Matters! Maryland, and the Just Kids Partnership.
- Provided client rights information, training, and outreach to tenants at Rent Court; to low-wage workers at job sites; and to homeless students and educators at homeless shelters, schools and service centers. The PJC’s legal staff also made presentations at numerous conferences and public events.

Established co-counseling partnerships with and engaged pro bono research with 68 attorneys and paralegals in private law firms. They provided 2,297 hours of volunteer, pro bono private attorney and paralegal involvement in our work, valued at $685,519.

www.publicjustice.org
With your help, we strengthen protections for tenants

Tenants who are economically poor are the most vulnerable to landlord retaliation because those tenants are the least able to fight back and they often do not have the time, resources, and education to fight back against retaliation.

—Testimony offered by Maryland Alliance of the Poor in favor of SB 800

Detra Thomas resides at Sage Management’s Parklawn Apartments in Baltimore City for her young son and is a member of the community group Right to Housing Alliance. In March, Ms. Thomas and two other tenants filed a class complaint against their landlord, Sage Management.

The tenants are represented by the Public Justice Center and Goldman, Minton, PC. The tenants allege that their landlord has engaged in the practice of “fee churning” that involves raising the cycle of state consumer protection laws and violates a Maryland landlord-tenant law for more than 30 years. According to the complaint, Sage Management operates hundreds of rental properties throughout Baltimore and recently paid out $200,000 in judgments in the past twelve months. Y ou can imagine the impact that even a single judgment can have on your circumstances and your ability to pay rent.

We give a SHOUT OUT to our many coalition partners, the co-sponsors of the legislation, Del. Barbara Fresh and Sen. Victor Ramirez, and the chairs of the committees and subcommittees that championed SB 800. Del. Fresh, Del. Maggie McIntosh, and Del. Dyana Williams. We want to recognize that after much negotiation and compromise, the Maryland Multi-Housing Association supported SB 800.

We meet far too many tenants who suffer actions through substandard housing, as part of realizing a human right to housing for all.

With your help, tenants sue to stop “fee churning”

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EDUCATION STABILITY

With your help, we keep kids in school

Training and support for Baltimore City shelters and homeless-serving organizations

With generous support from the Journey Home and the United Way of Central Maryland, we train staff at shelters and other homeless-serving organizations and facilitate the development of best practices for supporting homeless children’s education. To this end, PJC attorney Monisha Cherayil presented more than 20 trainings throughout Baltimore City last year. We also advocate on behalf of individual families referred primarily through these shelters and organizations so that their children have the opportunity to participate in and succeed in school.

OUTSTANDING PARTNER

A very special thank you to the Public Justice Center’s Outstanding Partner the Homeless Persons Representation Project for their tireless leadership on this important legislation. It’s a pleasure to serve by your side.

Zafar Shah

The University of Maryland School of Law’s Just Advice program offered on-site services at the District Court on Fayette Street in Baltimore. In October 2013, attorney Zafar Shah gave a guest lecture for about 20 of the program’s law students about landlord/tenant law. Later in the week, one of these students interviewed two co-tenants who had received no notice of their trial date and whose landlord then won a default judgment despite lacking a rental license. Explaining the facts to Zafar, the student remarked, “I couldn’t believe it. It’s just as bad as you told us.” The tenants became clients of PJC’s Human Right to Housing Project.

In January, attorney Matt Hill presented at a briefing to U.S. Congressional staff on a bill that would make the federal Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (PTFA) permanent and would add a private right of action to the law. Congressman John P. Sarbanes co-sponsored the bill. The PTFA is scheduled to sunset at the end of this year.

FOD FOR THOUGHT

“The city’s current inclusive housing law is just like Swiss cheese,” [Matt Hill] said. “And it’s just not creating the kinds of units that the folks who had drafted the law intended.”

“Main Street Project May Accelerate Change in Remington” [WYPR, 3/12/14]

“People who rely on Social Security income, and even veterans who use specific housing benefit programs, are affected by these kinds of discrimination.” [Zafar Shah]

“I’ve been real busy,” Pridget said. “I’m spending money that I don’t have, borrowing money that I can’t pay back... He asks all the time if he’s going to school, and some days I don’t know what to tell him because I just don’t have the money.”

“Baltimore school system sued over homeless students” [Baltimore Sun; 9/24/13]

In September 2013, Tameka Pridget and two other families filed a proposed class action lawsuit against the Baltimore City Public Schools for failing to identify homeless students, and take legally-mandated steps to ensure their stability and success in school, including through the provision of transportation, school uniforms, fee waivers, and information about their rights and resources available to them. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, schools are required to provide these services to homeless students to ensure that their loss or lack of housing does not compromise their education. The violations and lawsuit follow years of informal advocacy by the PJC and a broad community of organizations who support vulnerable families.

In October 2013, attorney Zafar Shah gave a guest lecture for about 20 of the program’s law students about landlord/tenant law. Later in the week, one of these students interviewed two co-tenants who had received no notice of their trial date and whose landlord then won a default judgment despite lacking a rental license. Explaining the facts to Zafar, the student remarked, “I couldn’t believe it. It’s just as bad as you told us.” The tenants became clients of PJC’s Human Right to Housing Project.

“I have one client, he tells me that everyone also looks forward to the bell at the end of the day.”

PJC Attorney Monisha Cherayil says, “But he wishes the day would go on and on. That really speaks to the program of school.”

“How Little Things Add Up: Safe Homes, Healthy Schools” [www.colorado.co]
Partners. Thank you!

As one of our Outstanding Persons Representation Project recognize the Homeless to homeless youth. We also leadership and commitment with the Homeless Persons Representation Project, for her with the Homeless Personen Education best practices in school districts throughout the state. We are also collaborating with local school districts and Departments of Social Services to implement education stability guarantees for children in foster care pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act. We played a key role in drafting the Report, and PJC attorney Monisha Cherayil served as co-chair of the Supportive Services sub-group, which was charged with studying education and other services. The report, which is available on our website, calls upon state and local agencies and lawmakers to take specific steps to better identify and serve the extraordinarily vulnerable and growing population of unaccompanied homeless youth. The PJC helped pass two bills in the 2014 Maryland General Assembly that will help unaccompanied homeless youth access higher education and other supportive services. One of these laws allows unaccompanied homeless youth to attend Maryland public universities, community colleges, and state-approved vocational programs tuition-free and to use other grants and scholarships for living expenses. The other creates a demonstration project to count unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults so that the state can better identify and meet their needs.

Looking Ahead:
We are partnering with the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a strategy for promoting homeless education best practices in school districts throughout the state. We are also collaborating with local school districts and Departments of Social Services to implement education stability guarantees for children in foster care pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act.

Advocacy for unaccompanied homeless youth

With your help, we advocate for young people who do not have stable housing or the support of a parent or legal guardian. Frequently, young people become “unaccompanied homeless youth” because of family conflict, a parent’s inability to provide support, or family rejection due to sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or other reasons.

In November 2013, a statewide Task Force, chaired by the Governor’s Office for Children, publicly released its Report and Recommendations on Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, the first of its kind in Maryland. We played a key role in drafting the Report, and PJC attorney Monisha Cherayil served as co-chair of the Supportive Services sub-group, which was charged with studying education and other services. The report, which is available on our website, calls upon state and local agencies and lawmakers to take specific steps to better identify and serve the extraordinarily vulnerable and growing population of unaccompanied homeless youth. The PJC helped pass two bills in the 2014 Maryland General Assembly that will help unaccompanied homeless youth access higher education and other supportive services. One of these laws allows unaccompanied homeless youth to attend Maryland public universities, community colleges, and state-approved vocational programs tuition-free and to use other grants and scholarships for living expenses. The other creates a demonstration project to count unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults so that the state can better identify and meet their needs.

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Recent figures from Maryland’s Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation show that wage theft is a major problem in our home state. In 2013, DLLR recovered nearly $250,000 in stolen wages, which is more than the total value of monies stolen through:

- A) All bank robberies combined;
- B) All purse-snatching combined;
- C) All pick-pocketing combined.

And that does not even begin to account for the untold amount of wages that went unrecovered. Even by the most conservative estimates, we’re not scratching the surface. Yet.

When employers pay less than minimum wage, refuse to pay overtime, force their employees to work off the clock, steal tips, withhold wages or simply refuse to pay workers at all, it devastates families. How are people supposed to pay their rent or buy groceries if they refuse to pay workers at all, it devastates families. How are people supposed to pay their rent or buy groceries if they

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With your help, we recaptured $347,000 in stolen wages and damages for 493 workers

The people who labor on the project claimed that the contractor, Lewis Brothers, paid its workers irregularly, did not pay the full amount that was owed, and never paid overtime wages despite the fact that many workers regularly worked more than 40 hours a week. In a recent rollout of a new federal law, workers on behalf of the workers seeking wages and damages against Lewis and a mechanic’s lien against the building owner. Special thanks to Cohen Milstein Spizz & Toll PLLC, who took this case through the Public Justice Center’s Litigation Partnership. The settlement agreement will provide more than $250,000 in payments to 262 workers. Many thanks to Mark Hanna, Jon Jacobs and Renee Gerni at Murphy Anderson who co-ordinated this case through our Litigation Partnership.

Not everyone who works in a restaurant is a young person hoping to save some spending money on the side. In fact, the average restaurant worker is 24 ½ years old and on public assistance. Many have families and many have made a career of working in restaurants. When you’re not receiving all of the wages and tips you’ve earned, it’s that much harder to support your children and pay the bills. With your support, this year we represented restaurant workers whose wages were stolen, co-counseling through our Litigation Partnership with Meghan A. Droste and Daniel A. Katz of the Law Offices of Gary M. Gilber & Associates in one case, and with attorneys Howard B. Hoffman and Bradford W. Warbasse in a second case.

In September 2013, the U.S. District Court in Maryland approved a settlement involving compensation for required job and safety training for low-wage asbestos abatement workers. PJC represented the employees of WMS Solutions, demanding pay for time spent attending state-mandated initial and “refresher” training courses. The employees also demanded reimbursement of costs they paid for the training programs and for personal protective equipment necessary for abatement work. The court was often paid by workers who lack the authorization or paid directly out-of-pocket by the workers. The settlement agreement will provide more than $250,000 in payments to 396 workers. Many thanks to Mark Hanna, Jon Jacobs and Renee Gerni at Murphy Anderson who co-ordinated this case through our Litigation Partnership.

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With your help, we advocate for the right to earn paid sick leave
The PJC is a lead member of Working Matters, a coalition of more than 100 businesses, faith, labor, women’s and advocacy groups. With your help, we support new legislation to give workers in Maryland the right to earn paid sick leave. Special thanks to Del. Johnny Olszewski and Sen. Catherine Pugh for being champions and lead sponsors of the Earned Sick and Safe Leave Act. We didn’t win this year, but we will return to the Maryland General Assembly in 2015 and we will call for your help.

Why do workers need paid sick days? When your children get sick, you shouldn’t have to abandon them to keep your job, pay bills or work. But many working moms and dads cannot earn paid sick days that they could spend down what they or a family member inevitably falls ill. Consequently more than 700,000 Marylanders, including those with significant contact with the public, report to work sick; send sick children to school or daycare, or in the worst situations, lose their job because they cannot come to work. The status quo is bad for our society, bad for Maryland’s economy, and bad for the public health.

With your help, we fought proposed limits to discovery tools
We, with a host of allies, weighed in on proposed changes to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that would have limited discovery based on the amount of money at stake in a case. Such a change would harm low-wage workers, who typically sue to recover relatively small amounts of money, and who would have even more difficulty proving their cases without discovery. In response, the Judicial Conference’s Advisory Committee withdrew four proposed Rule changes and modified the proposed rule to make “the importance of the issues at stake in the action” the most important factor in determining how much discovery can be done, rather than the amount of money in question. The Advisory Committee also noted that parties do not always have equal access to information, and that should be taken into account when courts determine the amount of discovery allowed. This is a victory for workers who will encourage federal courts to take low-wage workers’ cases seriously.

LOOKING AHEAD: We are delighted that, starting in January 2015, home health workers will be entitled to minimum wage and overtime pay under federal law. The new protections are afforded under regulations with your help, we will return to the Maryland General Assembly in 2015 and we will call for your help. The new protections are afforded under regulations with your help, we will return to the Maryland General Assembly in 2015 and we will call for your help.

SPECIAL FEATURE: APPELLATE ADVOCACY PROJECT
The PJC’s Appellate Advocacy Project uses appellate cases to influence the development of civil rights and poverty law. This year, we filed 10 appellate briefs (including amicus briefs and direct representation) in Maryland’s appellate courts and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and received six decisions. The cases involved consumer protection, housing, attorney fees, employment discrimination, wage and hour cases, and family law. The Appellate Advocacy Project routinely partners with other PJC projects in our pursuit of a just society. This year, we were particularly pleased with decisions that advanced the rights of workers. With your support, we won a major victory for workers
The big picture
“The Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law (MWPCA) allows employers who were not paid wages owed to them to seek those times the amount owed when an employer illegally withheld their wages. For at least the last 15 years, plaintiffs have been arguing that the protections afforded to employees under the MWPCA apply to the unpaid minimum wages and overtime wages they are owed. And, for about that period of time, federal judges wrongly have rejected those claims. The PJC led the way in correcting this injustice. First, in 2012, the PJC successfully authored an amendment to the MWPCA that sought to clarify that unpaid minimum and overtime wages are subject to the treble damages under the statute. However, even after that amendment, federal judges continued to rule the MWPCA did not protect employees who were not paid minimum wages or overtime wages. Finally, in August 2014, the Maryland Court of Appeals, Maryland’s highest state court, ruled unambiguously what PJC had been arguing for years—Maryland workers can seek treble damages under the MWPCA for the minimum wages and overtime wages their employers illegally withheld from them. The result in Peters came about as a result of PJC’s tireless efforts on behalf of Maryland workers.”
Daniel A. Katz, Senior Counsel, Law Offices of Gary M. Gilbert & Associates

The big victory
Victory can take a long time. Muriel Peters’ case spanned several years, and over than time, she was represented by our Workplace Justice team and these successful Munirahns Fellows. Her story demonstrates the courage of one woman as well as the collaboration required to build a just society. Ms. Peters worked as a home healthcare worker between 54 and 65 hours per week for more than a year, but she never received any overtime pay. She filed suit in Early Healthcare Giver, Inc. in Circuit Court without a lawyer, and she lost. The Circuit Court accepted her employer’s argument that Maryland wage laws did not apply to her. Undeterred, 
Ms. Peters appealed by herself to the Court of Special Appeals. There the PJC began representing her. The 2012-2013 Murnaghan Fellow Tom Davies persuaded the Court of Special Appeals that Maryland wage laws did apply to her, and that court sent the case to Circuit Court to be re-heard. Jean Zachariasiewicz, the 2013-2014 Murnaghan Fellow, joined Ms. Peters back at the Circuit Court level, and partially won the Circuit Court awarded her a dogged advocate for the Maryland’s Commissioner of Labor and Industry also filed a supportive amicus brief. So Ms. Peters prevailed. In August 2014, the Court of Appeals issued a decision confirming that workers were covered by the Maryland Wage and Hour Law and the Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law to sue for unpaid wages and seek additional damages. They held that courts must determine whether the employer failed to pay wages because of a legitimate dispute before workers, clarifying the Maryland laws available for recovering unpaid wages and damages through the court system. Our Workplace Justice Project has been working on this issue with the Murnaghan Fellows and our allies for years, so the Court’s unequivocal decision is especially gratifying.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MURIEL Peters, who persevered long after she knew Early Healthcare Giver had gone out of business and would likely never pay her, all because it was important to her to improve the law for herself and other workers in her field. We honored Ms. Peters with the John P. Sarbanes Courage Award in 2013.

The PJC submitted an amicus brief in support of Ms. Peters, and a panel of judges in the Maryland Court of Appeals agreed that the complaint was not protected under Title VII’s anti-retaliation provision. The Court of Appeals issued a mixed decision in 2010 and worked tirelessly with the Public Justice Center to clarify the scope of the Wage Payment and Collection Law through the years, including helping to author and provide advice on the amicus brief in the Peters case. Ms. Peters argued the case, supported by an amicus brief filed by the National Employment Law Project, Metropolitan Washington Employment Lawyers Association, Maryland Employment Lawyers Association, Employment Justice Center, Maryland Legal Aid, and Cas in the City. Maryland’s Commissioner of Labor and Industry also filed a supportive amicus brief.

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With your help, we pursue justice one step at a time. The PJC’s decade is one in which the PJC submitted an amicus brief in support of Ms. Peters, and a panel of judges in the Maryland Court of Appeals agreed that the complaint was not protected under Title VII’s anti-retaliation provision. The Court of Appeals issued a mixed decision in 2010 and worked tirelessly with the Public Justice Center to clarify the scope of the Wage Payment and Collection Law through the years, including helping to author and provide advice on the amicus brief in the Peters case. Ms. Peters argued the case, supported by an amicus brief filed by the National Employment Law Project, Metropolitan Washington Employment Lawyers Association, Maryland Employment Lawyers Association, Employment Justice Center, Maryland Legal Aid, and Cas in the City. Maryland’s Commissioner of Labor and Industry also filed a supportive amicus brief.

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With your help, we remove barriers

The Public Justice Center removes barriers that block people in poverty when they apply for Medicaid and other safety net services. We currently focus on language access and cultural competency through which we seek to correct racial disparities and create equal access to health care. To this end, we act as a liaison between the advocacy community and the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

Murnaghan Gatherings

Each fall, we welcome a new Murnaghan Fellow and send the previous fellow off to new adventures. A big thank you to our generous host, Diana Edwards Murnaghan. Despite monsoon-like conditions, we enjoyed a beautiful reception in the U.S. Capitol with supporters of the Murnaghan Fellowship and Sen. Michael Bennet, himself a former law clerk who worked with Judge Murnaghan.

Thank you, Andrew Baida

Andrew Baida of Rosenberg Martin Greenberg is one of the most generous and dedicated volunteer lawyers who contribute time and expertise to the PJC’s Appellate Advocacy Project and the Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr. Appellate Advocacy Fellowship. Andy advises our project team about strategy as we prepare our cases for appeal. He supports us in moot court exercises, helping us prepare for oral argument. He is always a huge help to our attorneys as they prepare the best possible oral argument.

A special thank you to Ilana Gelfman, the 13th Murnaghan Fellow. Ilana earned her law degree from Yale Law School in 2009. She then served for two years as a Skadden Fellow at Greater Boston Legal Services, where she specialized in post-foreclosure eviction defense. She next clerked for Judge Douglas P. Woodlock of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts and for Judge Robert A. Katzmann of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Upon completing her fellowship with PJC, Ilana began a clerkship with Justice Stephen Breyer of the United States Supreme Court.

A new Language Access Toolkit gives state agencies resources and guidance to make sure that people who speak little English can use government services. We had a hand in developing this toolkit through our work on the Governmental Access Workgroup and the Maryland Legal Aid Language Access Task Force. The Governor’s Task Force is a public-private partnership made up of representatives from various non-profits including Legal Aid, Maryland Hunger Solutions and the International Rescue Committee. GAW’s focus during the upcoming months will be to help agencies improve their training, and monitoring and implementation of the new language access policies created by each local Department of Social Services office during the past year.

Among the serious issues that came to our attention in the last year was the Affordable Care Act was the lack of notices sent to applicants and enrollees letting them know of final decisions regarding premium assistance and Medicaid eligibility. The result is that many people had no idea what happened to their application. In true PJC spirit, attorney Camilla Roberson along with several others drew attention to and asked questions about these problems, which resulted in a formal letter to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, a meeting with the executive director of the Exchange and donors for a reception in DC with Sen. Bennet.

Looking Ahead: PJC attorney Camilla Roberson stepped in as chair of the Governmental Access Workgroup in September 2014. The Governmental Access Workgroup is a public-private partnership made up of representatives from the Department of Human Resources, other state agencies and advocates from various non-profits including Legal Aid, Maryland Hunger Solutions and the International Rescue Committee. GAW’s focus during the upcoming months will be to help agencies improve their training, and monitoring and implementation of the new language access policies created by each local Department of Social Services office during the past year.
We give a SOUTHSOUTHSOUTH "Medicare coverage cliff."

barriers to information related to applicants, language access to reform. Current concerns remain in spite of healthcare implementation problems. We seek solutions to LOOking aHEAD:

necessary, take action around and address through administrative advocacy, training and other initiatives. LATF’s represented PJC at the Feria Latina Bar Association. Several participants of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel. She also participated in a roundtable on entitled "Justice Delayed Remains Justice Denied: The Pursuit of establish a civil right to counsel. She gave a community lecture place." Debra was invited to focus her fellowship on initiatives to can be used effectively and creatively to make the world a better place. "Debra was invited to focus her fellowship on initiatives to establish a civil right to counsel. She gave a community lecture entitled "Justice Delayed Remains Justice Denied. The Pursuit of a Civil Right to Counsel." She also participated in a roundtable on the issue, moderated by NUSL Professor Martha Davis, featuring several participants of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, including the PJC’s Lawyering Project, Jeremy Brown of Greater Boston Legal Services, Jayne Tyrrell of the Mass IOLTA Program Management, Office of the Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Resources for her leadership in improving cultural competency and language access within the Department of Human Resources and throughout other state agencies. We give a SOUTHSOUTH...sHOutOut We give a SOUTHSOUTH...sHOutOut

We give a SOUTHSOUTH We give a SOUTHSOUTH

Debra Gardner, Daynard Fellow at Northeastern University School of Law In January, PJC Legal Director Debra Gardner returned to her alma mater, the Northeastern University School of Law, to serve as a Daynard Public Interest Writing Fellow. The fellowship program "brings two distinguished public interest practitioners to campus each academic year for a three-day visit. The fellows serve as role models for students, demonstrating how legal skills can be used effectively and creatively to make the world a better place." Debra was invited to focus her fellowship on initiatives to establish a civil right to counsel. She gave a community lecture entitled "Justice Delayed Remains Justice Denied. The Pursuit of a Civil Right to Counsel." She also participated in a roundtable on the issue, moderated by NUSL Professor Martha Davis, featuring several participants of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, including the PJC’s Lawyering Project, Jeremy Brown of Greater Boston Legal Services, Jayne Tyrrell of the Mass IOLTA Program Management, and Michael Grae of K&L Gates and the American Bar Association.

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The Public Justice Center applauds Maryland Legal Aid’s Language Access Task Force for its excellent advocacy. This Task Force is co-chaired by Yousoufek Felix and Virginia Rosa, with support from Frank Natale at Legal Aid. LATF’s advocacy led to the identification of systemic problems that resulted in barriers to services for limited English proficient individuals throughout Maryland. The past year brought progress in strategizing about and addressing these barriers through administrative advocacy, training and other initiatives. LATF has also been instrumental in the creation of language access, cultural competency, and eligibility trainings for the Department of Human Resources.

OUTSTANDING PARTNER

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The Maryland Access to Justice Commission was created to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in Maryland’s civil justice system. The Commission brought together leaders and stakeholders from the Maryland judiciary, the legal services community, the Maryland State Bar Association, the Executive and Legislative Branches and Maryland’s law schools. Our staff shared the expertise and perspective of a legal advocacy organization and the clients we serve. Attorney John Pollock facilitates meetings of New York City advocates preparing to lobby for passage of three high court cases that have put forth arguments that could impact the right to counsel in basic needs civil cases. We are the backbone of a national movement to lead and motivate policymakers to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice.

Victory in two state high courts for parents living in poverty

This year, two state high courts held that there is a right to counsel in specific categories of civil cases. Both courts relied on amicus briefs arguing for this categorical approach to which the NCCRC contributed substantially.

In January, the Supreme Court of Hawaii unanimously ruled that parents living in poverty have a constitutional right to a state-paid lawyer in abuse/neglect and termination of parental rights proceedings. The NCCRC gave substantial input to an amicus brief filed by three local organizations that urged the Court to abandon the existing case-by-case approach in order to protect all Hawaii parents who live in poverty. The Court adopted the reasoning outlined in this brief.

In March, the Indiana Supreme Court made it clear that an Indiana statute guarantees a right to counsel for all indigent Indiana parents in abuse/neglect cases, reversing several lower courts that had held otherwise. It also held that the complete denial of counsel is a harmful error requiring automatic reversal. We helped Youth Law T.E.A.M. frame a petition to the court, which encouraged Indiana Legal Services to write an amicus brief, and helped with research and editing for that brief. The team effort had impact, with the Indiana Supreme Court agreeing with arguments put forth by the petitioner and the amicus brief.

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“[S]he is a client standing alone in a courtroom where her parenting skills and her children’s needs and custodians are all being challenged, and everyone else but her either is a lawyer or has a lawyer … [i]t seems inappropriate to claim that this error [in failing to appoint counsel in the neglect case] did not result in harm because the outcome of the [termination of parental rights] proceedings would have remained the same. In many ways, the harm was the TPR proceedings.”

With your help, we expanded access to justice

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission was created to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in Maryland’s civil justice system. The Commission brought together leaders and stakeholders from the Maryland judiciary, the legal services community, the Maryland State Bar Association, the Executive and Legislative Branches and Maryland’s law schools. Our staff shared the expertise and perspective of a legal advocacy organization and the clients we serve. Attorney John Pollock facilitated meetings of New York City advocates preparing to lobby for passage of three high court cases that have put forth arguments that could impact the right to counsel in basic needs civil cases.

Public Justice Center attorney John Pollock leads and staffs the coalition, offering technical assistance, research, and strategic planning.

The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel has more than 260 members from 36 states, and seeks to lead and motivate policymakers to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice.

With your help, we are the backbone of a national movement

“[I]f you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.”

(Unless you’re losing your children, or your home, or your health care, or...)

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ABA releases new resource for judges

The American Bar Association is poised to release the “Directory of Law Governing Appointment of Counsel in State Civil Proceedings.” We are also proud to have Orrick as one of our inaugural “organizational members” of NCCRC.

OUTSTANDING PARTNER

We are incredibly grateful to René Kathavala and the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe for securing and managing volunteers to help with right to counsel research that forms the backbone of not only our own advocacy efforts, but also the American Bar Association’s new “Directory of Law Governing Appointment of Counsel in State Civil Proceedings.” We are also proud to have Orrick as one of our inaugural “organizational members” of NCCRC.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

U.S. ranks behind most industrialized peers on access to justice

The World Justice Project’s 2014 Rule of Law Index, which was released in March, ranked the United States behind most of its industrialized nation peers on access to civil justice, placing the U.S. #18 out of 40 countries in its region, and 15th out of 40 countries with a similar income level. While the U.S. scored well overall in maintaining the rule of law (3rd overall in the world), its ranking dropped significantly when looking at civil justice specificity, which includes whether people “can access and afford legal advice and representation.” In fact, the U.S. tied for 6th out of 40 ranked countries, an even lower ranking than in the 2011-2013 report. The report said of the U.S., “Civil legal assistance is frequently expensive or unavailable, and the gap between rich and poor individuals in terms of both actual use of and satisfaction with the court system is significant.” PJC attorney John Pollock was a contributing expert to the report.

LOOKING AHEAD:

We shared extensive information and testimony with the Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland. We look forward to working closely with other advocates on next steps.

PUBLISHING


Our Workplace Justice team contributed to Winning Safer Workplaces: A Manual for State and Local Policy Reform. Published by Center for Progressive Reform, this manual compiles a lot of rules and policies that could be implemented by state and local governments to provide better protections for U.S. workers.

LEVEL TOWED worked for the PJC as a Jesuit Volunteer then went on to Gonzaga Law School. He invited attorney John Pollock to speak to staff and students via Skype during one of their Public Service Brown Bag & Justice discussions. John was also the featured speaker at the State Bar of Michigan’s panel on civil right to counsel, and on right to counsel panels at Northeastern Law School and Memphis Law School. In October 2013, the University of Baltimore School of Law hosted John for a well-attended presentation for the public about the right to counsel movement.

BEGINNING IN December 2013, Legal Director Debra Gardner began serving on the faculty of the Maryland Professionalism Course at the invitation of the Chair of the Maryland Professionalism Center, the Hon. Lynne A. Battaglia. Debra teams with a government lawyer to engage students in an interactive session on ethical issues that arise in government and public interest careers.

Ronnie Reno, AFP-MD Unsung Hero

PJC attorney Ronnie Reno works five days a week, like any other member of the staff. And after practicing privately at Venable for over 50 years, he certainly brings a tremendous wealth of experience and knowledge with him. But what sets him apart is that Ronnie is a full-time volunteer at the PJC. He joined the Human Right to Housing team in August 2010 and since then Ronnie has defended the rights of tenants in the city of Baltimore and across Maryland. In recognition of his service, the Maryland chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals – Maryland Chapter honored him with an Unsung Hero Award at their National Philanthropy Day celebration in November.

STAFF IN THE COMMUNITY

Looking for a meaningful professional opportunity where you can leverage your skills to make a difference? Our staff is doing exactly that! Our team members represent a cross-section of the public interest field, from local and state governments to social service agencies and public interest organizations. Our staff members are currently pursuing graduate degrees in a variety of fields, including law, public policy, business, and public administration. They bring diverse perspectives and experiences to our organization, which helps us to provide the best possible service to our clients.

The PJC is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing high-quality legal services to low-income individuals and families in Maryland. Our mission is to ensure that everyone in Maryland has access to the justice that they need and deserve. We believe that everyone has the right to equal protection of the law, and we work to ensure that this right is protected in Maryland. We provide legal services to those who cannot afford to pay for them, and we also provide legal education and advocacy to help ensure that the law is applied fairly and equitably.

Our staff members are passionate about their work and are committed to making a difference in the lives of those we serve. We are a diverse and dedicated team, with a wide range of skills and experiences. We value collaboration and teamwork, and we are committed to creating a positive and inclusive workplace.

We are currently seeking a full-time Paralegal to join our team. The paralegal will be responsible for conducting legal research, filing and clerical work, and other tasks as needed. The ideal candidate will have strong research skills, excellent organizational skills, and a commitment to social justice. Experience in a legal setting is preferred, but not required. The paralegal position is a full-time position with competitive benefits.

If you are interested in applying for this position, please submit your resume and cover letter to info@pjc.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

The PJC is an equal opportunity employer.

For more information about the PJC, please visit our website at www.pjc.org.
With your help, we build a just society.

With your help, we build a just society.

Syndicated with your help, we build a just society.
Champions of Justice

The following donors have shared with the PJC generous unrestricted contributions totaling $1,000 or more. Your support affords us the flexibility to meet injustice where it rises and to use the tools necessary to balance the scales of justice—no matter how long or short your gift. We are grateful for our donors.

2010 Matching Gifts

The Aldo Foundation
Legg Mason Global Asset Management
T.Rowe Price Foundation

NCCRF Organizational Members

The Chicago Bar Association
NCCRF

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

The Philadelphia Bar Association

The Journey Home

The Sutcliffe Foundation

Orrick, Herrington, Ninderhhagen

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Thank you to the many law firms that contributed to PJC’s Annual Campaign or collaborated with us through our Litigation Partnership. We also thank those who made possible the cy pres awards that supported our work this year.

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Thanks to our leadership donors who worked through strategic growth ideas during our President’s Dinner in May.

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Gallagher, Evelius & Jones, PJC supporter since 1989
“Gallagher has long been committed to the fantastic work of the Public Justice Center. Its staff is tough, experienced, and creative, and was all too Arts to its disposal to obtain the best possible results for its clients. The PJC routinely wins cases that have a tremendous positive impact on the lives of poor and under-represented men, women, and children in Baltimore City and throughout Maryland. Your firm’s dollars can be put to no better use than to support this great organization.”
—Paul Caiola

Cohen Milstein, PJC supporter since 2004
“Cohen Milstein is proud to support the Public Justice Center. We found many overlapping goals in our work representing plaintiffs in class cases and the impact work that the PJC does so effectively. We are happy to stand shoulder to shoulder with PJC in advancing justice for the under-represented. Moreover, PJC goes beyond the litigation to also bring legislative advocacy and public education tools to ensure that problems are tackled from every angle. Finally, PJC is so efficient, getting maximum impact from every investment made, who wouldn’t be happy to donate?”
—Christine Webber
The following information was prepared from end of year financial statements prior to the completion of the annual independent audit.

We knew this would be a tight year going in because of the loss of several foundation grants, and the Board approved a budget with a $229,746 deficit. We did not replace a vacant attorney position to keep expenses down, which reduced our staff from 20 to 19 full time employees at the end of FY2014. Fundraising was better than expected: we raised 120% of projected revenue, thanks to new foundation grants, strong growth in support from our individual donors, and the receipt of earned attorney fees and pro bono awards. We held expenses to 106% of budget, and thus were able to reduce the projected deficit from $229,746 to only $41,026 at the end of the year. The PJC remains in a strong position financially, with more than $1.2 million in unrestricted net assets (reserves).

Strong advocacy is possible only with a strong base of support, and we are thankful for the many people and organizations who make our work possible.

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: 410.246.9010. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland have been certified by Independent Charities of America and are subject to federal and state regulations regarding charitable solicitation and fundraising.

NET INCOME $1,755,105
No one should ever have to live on a poverty “event horizon.”

Every person who is living on the brink brings us all closer to that terrifying, irrevocable but, in this world and in this time, absolutely preventable point of no return.

Nancy Sherman, the Caroline Center, in her guest blog post “From a distance: why the new “war on poverty” is not a war” April 3, 2014.