

Community
Powered
Advocacy at
Philadelphia
Legal
Assistance

BY



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**





Dear Friends & Supporters,

Closing the book on 2025 comes with a sense of relief. It was a year marked by uncertainty and challenge, one that tested the resilience of our clients, our staff, and the broader community of nonprofit service providers here in Philadelphia, across Pennsylvania, and throughout the country.

In moments like these, we return to the basics. At Philadelphia Legal Assistance, that means working alongside our clients, partners, and supporters every day to advance a more just and accessible legal system in Philadelphia – one person, one family, and one issue at a time.

Working alongside our clients takes many forms. It means listening carefully when someone calls our hotline in crisis. It means showing up in neighborhood health centers, ready to help patients navigate urgent legal needs where they live. It means approaching each case with creativity, persistence, and a deep commitment to justice. This year, we also expanded our community outreach and education, connecting with residents at neighborhood events, sharing resources for homeowners, and visiting farm labor camps across the Commonwealth to assist vulnerable agricultural workers.

At the same time, PLA faced a potential financial crisis, as funding from the Legal Services Corporation came under serious threat in Congress. In response, so many of you, our dedicated supporters, stepped forward with generosity, advocacy, and partnership. Because of you, as well as new partnerships with the William Penn Foundation, TD Bank, Vanguard, and Phillies Charities, and bipartisan support for LSC in Congress, we were able not only to sustain our core services but to grow.

This year marked an important milestone: for the first time in our history, PLA began providing eviction defense representation. With support from the City of Philadelphia, our partners at Community Legal Services, and the Skadden Foundation, we are now able to stand in court with tenants at risk of losing their homes, expanding our impact at a time of urgent need.

We are so grateful to all of you as we embark on our 30th year of operation. Your support makes it possible not only to respond to the urgent legal needs of our Philadelphia communities, but also to challenge the systemic barriers that create inequality in the first place.

As we look ahead, the need for civil legal services remains profound. But so does our resolve. Together, we will continue building a Philadelphia where everyone, regardless of income, can protect their rights, secure their future, and thrive.

Thank you for standing with us.

Maureen Olives
Executive Director

THANK YOU

Total Number of Clients Served

7,726



**HOTLINE
SUCCESS**

461

Number of Homes Saved
Through Save Your Home Philly Hotline

8,110

Calls Answered on the
Save Your Home Philly Hotline

12,888

Calls Answered on the
Eviction Diversion Program Tenant Hotline

**CLIENT
SUCCESS**

955

Medical Legal Community
Partnership Clients

242

Taxpayer Support
Clinic Clients

536

Unemployment
Compensation Clients

**COMMUNITY
SUCCESS**

438

Farmworkers

1,021

Domestic Violence Survivors

2,432

People with Disabilities

398

Veterans

1,979

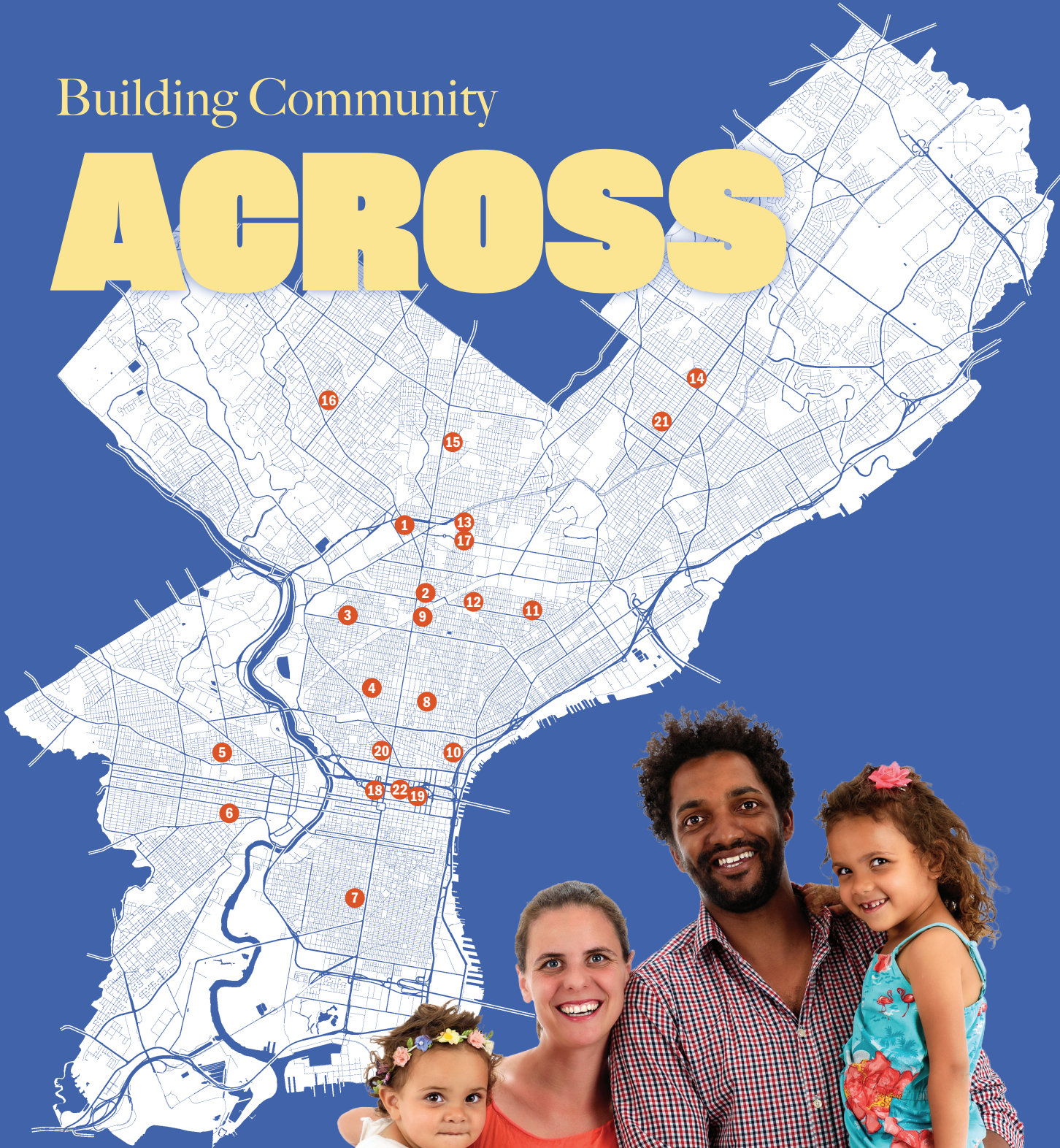
Seniors

Strength in Numbers



Building Community

ACROSS



Across Philadelphia, PLA shows up where legal help is needed most. From health centers to neighborhood hubs, our advocates work side by side with organizational partners and community members to make legal support more accessible, responsive, and rooted in the places people already trust. By embedding our work throughout the city, we can respond more quickly, build stronger relationships, and ensure that legal help is available where it can make the greatest difference.

Our Sites

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Fair Hill Community Physicians - Nicetown
4350 Germantown Avenue | 11 Esperanza Health Center
Kensington and Allegheny |
| 2 Temple Pediatrics
3223 N. Broad Street | 12 Maria de los Santos Medical Center
3rd and Allegheny |
| 3 Strawberry Mansion Health Center
28th and Dauphin | 13 Esperanza Hunting Park
6th and Cayuga |
| 4 Health Center 5
20th and Berks | 14 Health Center 10
Cottman and Bustleton |
| 5 Health Center 4
44th and Haverford | 15 Einstein Medical Center
Broad and Tabor Road |
| 6 Health Center 3
43rd and Baltimore | 16 Health Center 9
131 E Cheltenham Avenue |
| 7 Health Center 2
Broad and Morris | 17 PA Careerlink North Philadelphia
4261 N 5th Street |
| 8 Girard Medical Center
8th and Girard | 18 Philadelphia Family Court Help Center
1501 Arch Street |
| 9 Fair Hill Community Physicians – Liberty Square
13th and Lehigh | 19 Philadelphia Legal Assistance Offices
718 Arch Street |
| 10 Health Center 6
3rd and Girard | 20 New Day Drop-In Center
701 North Broad Street |
| | 21 Northeast Services Hub
6434 Castor Avenue |
| | 22 The Crane Center
1001 Vine Street |

PHILADELPHIA

COMMUNITY ACTION



Saving the Family Court Help Center

Staffed by PLA, the Philadelphia Family Court Help Center is a vital resource for parents and caregivers who seek help with family court matters without an attorney or need general information about court proceedings.

In late 2025, the Help Center faced an uncertain future after the loss of federal funding. The potential closure of the Help Center would have left many families without legal guidance at critical moments in custody and Protection from Abuse proceedings. In response, leaders across Philadelphia's legal and advocacy communities came together quickly to protect this important service and ensure that families could continue to receive help when they need it most.

The Philadelphia Bar Association Civil Gideon Task Force formed a working group to respond to the funding crisis. The group is led by Frank Cervone, the former long-time

Executive Director of the Support Center for Child Advocates. Frank has convened stakeholders from the private bar, the public interest community, and the court to develop both short-term and long-term solutions. Through a charitable giving campaign, this coalition raised more than \$30,000 to support the work of a Family Court Help Center Advocate through June 2026, allowing the Help Center to remain open while longer-term funding is pursued.

**FAMILY
LAW**



For the past five years, PLA has played a central role in the success of the City's Eviction Diversion Program. When Philadelphia first launched the program, the City turned to us to operate the Eviction Diversion Program Hotline and serve as the central point of contact for tenants.

EXPANDING

The Eviction Diversion Program

PLA brought deep experience to this work, including nearly two decades of operating the Save Your Home Philly Hotline and supporting the Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program. Since the Program's beginning, PLA has helped thousands of tenants understand their rights, confirm their participation in the program, connect with housing counselors and mediation, and access legal advice and representation when they need it most.

Over the past year alone, PLA's Eviction Diversion team handled more than 13,000 calls from tenants seeking help. PLA attorneys and advocates provided legal advice and representation to more than 1,300 tenants, negotiated with landlords, and represented tenants in court when necessary. Through conversations with thousands of low-income tenants, PLA identified an important gap in the program. About a third of tenants in the Eviction Diversion Program are assigned to the Direct Negotiation Pathway. These tenants are expected to negotiate with their landlords on their own and often lack the information and support needed to do so successfully. Furthermore, these tenants were not eligible for Targeted Financial Assistance where they could receive

financial assistance to repay rent arrears. In response, PLA developed a pilot initiative where PLA advocates host live webinars to educate tenants about the Eviction Diversion Program, give them practical tools to negotiate with their landlords, and answer any questions they may have about the direct negotiation process. Early results have been very promising. More than 80% of workshop participants reported a better understanding of how to negotiate with their landlord, and nearly two thirds reached agreements that helped them stay in their homes.

Building on this success, Philadelphia Legal Assistance is seeking to expand its work to support tenants assigned to the Direct Negotiation Pathway. With new support, PLA would provide education, legal advice, and direct representation to tenants who need help negotiating with their landlords, connecting them to financial assistance programs, and representing them in court when negotiations break down. This expansion would significantly broaden PLA's community reach, allowing PLA to serve hundreds more tenants.

**EVICTIION
DIVERSION**

The **IMPACT** of the UC Navigator Program

PLA's Unemployment Compensation Navigator program helps workers secure unemployment benefits they are entitled to when they lose a job through no fault of their own, with a particular focus on supporting parents and caregivers.

Originally launched through a pilot program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and now supported by the William Penn Foundation, the program places PLA staff directly in the community at CareerLink North in North Philadelphia. There, navigators meet workers face to face and provide one on one help with unemployment applications, weekly claim filings, claim issues, and appeals. For many workers, especially those

raising children or with limited English proficiency, this kind of personal assistance can make the difference between receiving benefits or going without critical income during a stressful period of unemployment.

The program has already produced meaningful results for Philadelphia families. Between April and September 2025, PLA assisted 485 workers at CareerLink North and provided direct navigator support to 114 workers with children under the age of nine. This work helped families with young children secure at least \$400,000 in unemployment benefits during that six-month period. The UC Navigator program helps families in our community stay financially stable while they look for their next opportunity. This makes all the difference in the lives of children in Philadelphia who require family stability to thrive.

**UNEMPLOYMENT
COMPENSATION**

Meeting Patients Close to Home

For more than twelve years, PLA's Medical Legal Community Partnership (MLCP) has helped address the legal problems that often stand in the way of good health.

The program places legal advocates directly inside community health centers across Philadelphia, where they work alongside doctors, nurses, and social workers to identify and resolve issues that affect patients' well-being. These can include problems with health insurance, unsafe housing conditions, or barriers to accessing income support. What began as a single volunteer attorney has grown into a network serving seventeen sites, including all eight Philadelphia Department of Public Health Centers, two Federally Qualified Health Centers, and hospital-based community practices at Einstein Medical Center and Temple Health. By meeting patients where they already receive care, the MLCP makes it easier for families to connect with legal help that can improve both their health and their stability.

The impact of this approach can be life-changing. One MLCP client, who is Deaf and communicates primarily through American Sign Language, had tried for years to report his wages to Social Security but was repeatedly denied an interpreter. As a result, he received a notice claiming he owed nearly \$87,000 in overpaid disability benefits. With support from MLCP attorneys, he challenged the decision and ultimately secured a full waiver of the debt after a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. Removing that burden restored his financial stability and underscored the importance of language access and patient-centered advocacy right where it is needed. Stories like this show how embedding legal advocates in trusted community health settings helps ensure that people receive the support and justice they deserve.

HEALTH JUSTICE

**MEDICAL
LEGAL
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**

Asking the Community What They Need

In 2025, PLA undertook a comprehensive legal needs assessment to better understand the challenges facing low-income communities across the city and to ensure that our services continue to respond to those needs.

PLA conducts this assessment every five years as part of its commitment to listening to the communities we serve and strengthening our work. To capture a wide range of perspectives, PLA used a mixed-methods approach that included surveys of current and former clients, community partners, staff, and board members. The process gathered 314 responses from clients through email, telephone interviews, and online surveys, along with input from eighty community stakeholders such as social service providers, housing counselors, and legal aid organizations.

The assessment provided valuable insights that will help guide PLA's work in the years ahead. It identified specific neighborhoods and ZIP codes where the need for legal assistance is especially high, highlighted the issues most frequently raised by clients, and revealed areas where demand for services exceeds available funding. These findings help PLA to focus its resources where they can have the greatest impact and strengthen partnerships with community organizations that work alongside us. Most importantly, the needs assessment reinforces PLA's commitment to remaining responsive to the voices of the people we serve and ensuring that our programs continue to meet the evolving needs of Philadelphia communities.



**COMMUNITY
NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

Keeping Communities Intact by Keeping Homeowners in Their Homes

When a Philadelphia homeowner fell behind on his mortgage payments, he turned to PLA for help. Nicole Piusienski, a PLA paralegal, worked with the client to secure a \$40,000 Homeowner's Assistance Fund grant to cover a large portion of his mortgage arrears.

However, like many homeowners facing financial hardship, the amount he owed exceeded the maximum grant available. To keep his home, he also needed a loan modification that would allow him to bring the remaining balance current and move forward with manageable payments.

Nicole worked closely with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency and the mortgage servicing company to coordinate the grant and the loan modification. When she realized the servicer had not properly applied the grant to the client's account and intended to apply it in a way that would make him ineligible for assistance, she continued to

press for a solution. After weeks of back and forth and with the deadline to accept the loan modification approaching, Nicole escalated the issue to a contact at Fannie Mae, the owner of the mortgage. The next day, the servicer agreed to extend the modification deadline and properly apply the grant funds.

Because of Nicole's persistence, the client was able to resolve his mortgage arrears and remain in his home. Helping homeowners stay in their homes not only protects individual families from displacement, it also helps preserve the stability of neighborhoods and the strength of Philadelphia communities.

STABILITY



**CONSUMER
HOUSING**

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PRODUCE

Farmworkers Harvesting Mushrooms in Kennett Square



In Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, known as the “Mushroom Capital of the World,” the mushrooms that appear on dinner tables across the country begin with the work of farmworkers.

The region produces more than 500 million pounds of mushrooms each year and accounts for roughly half of the mushrooms consumed in the United States. Behind this massive agricultural industry are farmworkers, many of whom are employed through the H-2A visa program and face unique legal challenges related to their work, housing, and immigration status.

Through the Pennsylvania Farmworker Project, PLA works to ensure that these workers know their rights and can access legal support when those rights are violated.

PLA advocates help farmworkers address wage theft, unjust termination, unsafe working conditions, substandard housing, and workplace discrimination or harassment. By conducting outreach in communities like Kennett Square and across Chester County, PLA is extending its community reach beyond Philadelphia and supporting workers whose labor feeds families across the country. This work helps ensure that the food on our tables is harvested by people who have access to the legal resources and support they need to experience fair treatment, dignity, and safety on the job.



FINANCIALS

\$10,865,978

Income

\$2,556,681

Beginning Net Assets

\$10,473,623

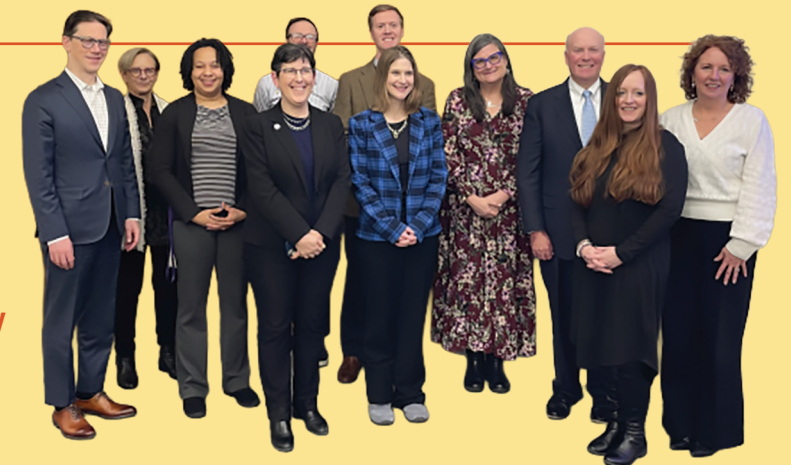
Expenses

\$2,953,471

Ending Net Assets

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Mission

PHILADELPHIA LEGAL ASSISTANCE (PLA) is the federally funded civil legal aid provider for Philadelphia's low-income community. Founded in 1996, PLA's mission is to enforce and protect the rights of individuals and families by providing accessible, creative, and high-quality legal assistance.





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