Safeguarding homes, preserving neighborhoods for future generations.
Dear Friend:

In 2021, more than a quarter million low-income Marylanders faced pressing civil legal problems but simply could not afford help. That could have meant navigating a complex and confusing legal system, alone. Fortunately, because of the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (PBRC), thousands did not have to.

As the “matchmaker” between volunteer attorneys, pro bono programs, and indigent clients, PBRC continued its unique dual role serving as a direct service provider in over 1,000 cases while also acting as the state’s central clearinghouse for pro bono legal services. PBRC trained hundreds of legal advocates and matched them with partners across Maryland to fight on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors. We continued our tradition of capacity-building via strong partnerships with our volunteers, the courts, funders, and other legal services providers.

Throughout the year PBRC offered training, technical assistance, coordination, and mentorship to sustain a strong safety net of services for Maryland’s disenfranchised. These efforts included triaging cases for partner agencies, making warm referrals, managing collaborative grants, administering a statewide Litigation Fund, debuting the first Speakers Impact Series, spearheading the Partners for Justice Conference, and coordinating training, and support services for pro bono and staff attorneys.

The year also presented continued and unique challenges for our clients as a result of the pandemic. Against the backdrop of court closings, record-high illegal evictions, and mounting consumer debt problems, we quickly established a statewide housing and consumer hotline, staffed by attorneys, which became a focal point for at-risk tenants and debtors. We ran numerous tax sale, advance planning, and immigration clinics remotely, and presented to schools, community groups and faith-based entities about legal rights and resources. Despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic in reaching clients, PBRC directly resolved 1,143 cases with impressively high success rates—winning positive outcomes for over 94% of our clients.

PBRC’s work extended beyond capacity-building and direct service to systemic reform. Our team members played an essential role in advocating for legislation that would stabilize low-income neighborhoods and stave off tax sales of homes and win a historic right of “access to counsel” in eviction proceedings.

Since its founding 32 years ago, PBRC has been the go-to organization for pro bono civil legal services in our state. Our successes in 2021 are a tribute to the incredible PBRC team and the dedicated volunteers who remained steadfast in their commitment to bridge the gap for those traditionally without access to legal services.

As ever, we remain committed to addressing the economic, racial, and social inequalities and ensuring that there a fair and equitable justice system for all.

We hope you find value in the report. Thank you for your many contributions to our mission!

Sharon E. Goldsmith, Esq.
Executive Director

Sima G. Fried, Esq.
Board President
Direct Services

PBRC offered direct services through innovative, free legal clinics in the courthouse and community, providing immediate legal assistance to low-income Marylanders in areas of vital need such as eviction prevention, financial stability, home preservation, and immigration—all areas that help stabilize families and households while closing justice gaps.

In 2021, our team:

Recruited volunteers who provided $268,025 in donated legal services to low-income Marylanders who lacked legal representation.

Impacted 3,368 people through our direct legal services, despite having to navigate court closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Saved clients $566,785 in legal fees and alleged unpaid debts that could be diverted towards spending on basic necessities.

Professional Training & Support Services

PBRC serves as the state’s premier coordinator, trainer, and support center for volunteer civil legal assistance. For 32 years, PBRC’s team has recruited, trained, and mentored volunteer attorneys and other advocates to widen access to legal services. The second Professional Skills Academy also presented attorney Fellows a special opportunity for diversity, inclusion and service with one-on-one mentorship and training.

In 2021, our team:

Trained 864 lawyers and advocates, 499 of whom were volunteer attorneys deployed to over 40 partner organizations.

Trained volunteers who provided 1,288 hours of volunteer legal service at PBRC’s legal clinics, helping to meet the heightened need for legal assistance.

Offered over 50 legal trainings that can be accessed on-demand across many areas of law, including: Estate Planning, Litigation Skills, Eviction Prevention, Veteran’s Assistance, and more!
One all-too-common way residents lose their homes is through the tax sale process. If a homeowner is behind on their property tax bill by as little as $750 on April 30 of any given year, Baltimore City holds an auction to sell the lien to a third-party private investor who purchases the right to foreclose on the home. For most homeowners, this means that they can lose their home of many years for a single missed payment. One year of hardship—an illness, an accident, a job loss, a death in the family—can result in homelessness, even for families without a mortgage.

With the economic devastation of the pandemic, PBRC was active in advocacy efforts to prevent additional harm to Baltimore City residents from the usual tax sale. In March 2021, PBRC’s Home Preservation Project Director spoke at a press conference at City Hall to call on the Mayor to protect homeowners from tax sale and to reform the system in the long term. At both the press conference and in an Op-Ed published by the Baltimore Sun, PBRC asked the City government to cancel or postpone the sale to prevent compounding economic harm that would otherwise result from this emergency—harm which would fall heaviest on low-income neighborhoods, seniors, and on communities of color in Baltimore—and help preserve homeownership for hundreds of families experiencing economic crisis who need time to recover financially.

**Eviction Prevention & Access to Counsel Advocacy**

The economic ripple effects of the pandemic have created an eviction crisis and laid bare systematic failures that lead to housing instability in marginalized communities. As many households experienced job instability, tenants who had never missed a rent payment accrued unmanageable amounts of back rent. Initiated in 2017, PBRC’s Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day Program was the first in the state to utilize volunteer attorneys alongside staff attorneys for day-of-court representation in Rent Court. As such, team members saw firsthand the dramatic impact free counsel in eviction proceedings has on ensuring tenants have housing stability. With this experience, PBRC was at the forefront of the Access to Counsel movement—which successfully passed the 2021 Maryland Legislative session—ensuring that Maryland tenants have access to free representation in eviction proceedings and allowing organizations like PBRC to expand upon their proven success to level the playing field and prevent families from being improperly removed from their homes.

**Tax Sale Advocacy**

Since August, more than 400 people have been evicted in Baltimore

Public interest lawyers say they are overwhelmed with struggling renters and harsh landlords. A March today calls for relief for renters and the homeless.

More: Protests call for rent court to be postponed due to the pandemic. (Giusi Busi)
Home Preservation Project

Building equity in communities by preserving intergenerational wealth.

For many families, their home is their one significant asset. Losing a home is often the first trigger in a series of devastating economic and social consequences. PBRC’s Home Preservation Project (HPP) was created to keep people in their homes. By providing legal tools and support, we help long-time community members age in place, keep wealth in their neighborhoods, and protect the rights of homeowners. In FY21, our team accomplished this goal through 57 remote and community-based clinics in estate planning and tax sale prevention, benefiting 112 homeowners.

At HPP’s Estate Planning clinics, our attorneys offer free life planning services, including the creation of advance medical directives, wills, and financial powers of attorney to community members. In 2021, while in-person estate planning clinics were paused, the expansion of virtual tools allowed us to meet clients where they were. The HPP team worked tirelessly—from making multiple appointments with families, driving to neighborhoods to drop off client forms, and calling administrative offices to check on the status of pending applications—to ensure clients received the help they needed.

“Estate planning is about more than just passing along assets or property. It’s your life’s story, thoughts, passions, and belongings...This clinic helps those individuals who cannot afford legal services get a plan in place that serves their needs and offers help in drafting documents that provide for financial and medical representation if the need arises.”  - Raymond Brown, HPP Volunteer

In the spring, the HPP team mailed postcards to homeowners on the tax sale list, inviting them to a free Tax Sale Prevention clinic to receive one-on-one consultations with a pro bono attorney, as well as education about other resources, such as homeowner tax credits or tax exemptions, energy or water assistance, and housing repairs.

In 2021, many of our clients ended up on the tax sale list due to pandemic-related issues, including an increasing number of homeowners who were unemployed and unable to pay their property tax bills for the first time. We also worked with clients who, unexpectedly, did not receive their Homeowner’s Tax Credit, which helps to reduce their tax bill to an affordable amount. Mail delays due to large-scale postal system issues were often the culprit, and our team conducted direct outreach to governmental offices to find the applications or resubmit them.

Joanne’s* story:

At the age of 68, Joanne* learned she was on the tax sale list for the first time. A homeowner for 40 years, and now on a fixed income, Joanne regularly applied for and received the Homeowners’ Tax Credit. So, she was confused when she received a huge $3,000 tax bill. Joanne called multiple places looking for help but could never get an explanation about why she did not receive the 2021 credit. Fortunately, Joanne received a postcard in the mail from PBRC’s Home Preservation Project. PBRC connected Joanne to an attorney who advocated on her behalf and learned that due to pandemic-related postal delays and oversights at the tax credit office, her application was never processed. On the spot, PBRC got the tax office to review her application and Joanne immediately received a credit of $2,661. This reduced her bill to an affordable $459 and ensured that Joanne could keep her home.
Courtroom Advocacy Project

The Courtroom Advocacy Project (CAP) is a unique pro bono program providing day-of-court representation for tenants and consumers through Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) and the Consumer Protection Project (CPP). CAP fills a critical need in the community for immediate legal assistance, preserving housing and reducing or eliminating unjustified debt for struggling families. In 2021, PBRC attorneys were crucial in helping individuals navigate the ever-changing landscape of multiple court closures, newly available resources, and evolving legal protections related to the pandemic. CAP team members met regularly with the court to recommend practices and procedures that would better serve the community while expediting processes and continued to offer free legal resources wherever feasible.

Consumer Protection Project

Resolving debt lawsuits to avoid crippling judgments.

Each year, tens of thousands of individuals are sued for outstanding debts. The clients who come to the Consumer Protection Project (CPP) are from all levels of society and are often overwhelmed by challenging personal circumstances, like medical bills or a recent job loss. At the critical moment before a debt collection proceeding, PBRC counsels the client and often negotiates with the creditor to resolve or reduce the debt owed. The savings for the clients can be life-changing, preventing wage garnishments or tough choices between paying medical bills, rent, or debt. Our attorneys help clients create manageable payment plans they can truly afford, providing them with a sustainable path to paying their debt and securing financial stability in the future.

During the pandemic, more families struggled to make ends meet after losing their job or suffering a medical setback. To ensure clients could access the same free legal services they were provided in-person, PBRC coordinated with the Prince George’s County judiciary to launch the only remote clinic in the state. PBRC worked creatively with the court to keep cases moving, implement remote documents and ensure that people had access to pro bono services.

In 2021, our team:

- Provided extended representation that helped 98% of CPP clients achieve a favorable outcome in their case, such as dismissal or reasonable payment plan.
- Saved $293,988.95 so their hard-earned dollars could support basic necessities like food and shelter.
- Advocated for 317 consumers through day-of-court representation at in-court and remote legal clinics.

Henrietta’s* story:

Elderly and with a physical disability, Henrietta* came to PBRC’s Consumer Protection Clinic hoping to negotiate her debt to a lower payment. Although the original debt was small, late payment fees and court costs had caused it to balloon to over $1,000—an insurmountable amount to Henrietta. She did not receive government benefits, had an incapacitated spouse, and did not have any income or assets to her name. Though she had hoped to simply work out a new payment plan for her debt, the PBRC attorney negotiated a complete dismissal of the debt due to hardship, clearing Henrietta of the entire bill. With the burden of this debt lifted from her shoulders, she can now use her time, energy, and money for other necessities.
Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day

Preventing Homelessness Through Rent Court.

PBRC’s staff and trained volunteers represent tenants in Rent Court in Baltimore City and Baltimore County through the Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) program. Since the program’s inception, PBRC has represented more than 1,700 tenants in rent court and helped thousands more navigate complex rental and housing issues. Tenants appearing in Rent Court are nearly always unrepresented and often unaware of their rights as renters, such as the right to a safe, habitable home. A tenant with a lawyer is much more likely to prevail and avoid a life disruption than a tenant navigating the court alone: in 2021, 96% of clients represented by PBRC attorneys either avoided an eviction entirely or were granted a postponement delaying the eviction.

During the pandemic, the housing issues with which our attorneys grappled were magnified as the community had to contend with the public health issues surrounding eviction—it could be the difference between life and death if a family was not able to stay in their home. Amid the court closures and reopenings, PBRC remained a reliable resource for tenants by launching the innovative Tenant Hotline, where Marylanders receive quick access to critical information, referrals, and offers for representation when possible. In 2021, our team answered 550 calls to the Tenant Hotline from Marylanders in need. TVLD’s work also became more challenging and time-consuming as our attorneys navigated the added resources and ever-changing legal safeguards, from helping tenants access emergency rental assistance to understanding the various COVID protections that helped to keep families housed.

**In 2021:**

TVLD held a total of 81 clinics at Baltimore City Rent Court.

Staff and volunteer attorneys triaged 465 litigants and provided day-of-court representation to 197 tenants in their eviction cases.

Favorable case outcomes achieved in TVLD saved clients a total of $272,796.21.

**Frank’s* story:**

Frank arrived at rent court in a panic. After hearing the PBRC staff attorney announce free legal help, Frank quickly signed up and showed the Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day team his court summons, which claimed that he owed more than $4,000. Frank had lost his job when his employer closed during the pandemic, but he had found new work and had proof of paying $2,000 toward his balance already. Nevertheless, Frank’s landlord told him to come to court or risk being evicted that day. Distraught, and at a loss for how he was going to immediately pay the back rent, Frank was convinced he would be homeless by the afternoon.

With the help of the PBRC team, Frank’s case was dismissed, and he was connected to rental assistance to help him with the rent still owed. Frank was so relieved that he would not be evicted and that he could pay the rest of his back rent.
Maryland Immigrant Legal Assistance Project

Connecting immigrants to help and hope.

Legal representation is the number one factor that determines success in an immigration case—unaccompanied children with a lawyer are four times more likely to receive a positive outcome than a child without representation. Without an attorney, many immigrants with valid claims to remain in the United States end up being deported because they are unable to follow the complex process to make their case.

PBRC’s Maryland Immigrant Legal Assistance Project (MILAP) trains and deploys volunteer attorneys and interpreters to provide legal assistance to immigrant children and families, connecting them with resources for help and preserving their claims to remain in the United States. MILAP runs the only walk-in legal clinic in Maryland’s Immigration Court, serving as the first line of defense for hundreds of immigrants per year. This past year our team began to offer new pro se asylum services to help families prepare and file applications.

In 2021, PBRC provided 243 remote consultations to individuals at risk of deportation. To help this many people while the courts remained closed to our staff because of the pandemic, the MILAP team had to think creatively about outreach to immigrants with pending cases. The team cultivated new relationships and partnered with community organizations, school districts, food banks, and other nonprofit organizations to provide 12 education sessions that reached over 427 people. Alongside these community presentations, our team mailed informational flyers to over 160 organizations across Maryland and promoted their services in the Spanish news outlets *el Pregonero* and *Latino Opinion Baltimore*.

“*The two days a month I volunteer with MILAP give me more satisfaction as a lawyer than any two months I ever worked in private practice. I see my grandmother in my clients, and I want to do what I can to help them achieve what my family was able to achieve in this country.*”

- William Meyer, MILAP Volunteer

Rosa’s* story:

Rosa* came to the United States from Honduras in 2018 after being physically and sexually abused, both by her partner and at work. When she first met a PBRC volunteer in Immigration Court back in 2019, she was incredibly overwhelmed. Rosa’s son was still in Honduras, hiding from gang members, while her daughter had been murdered for refusing to divulge his location to the gang. Rosa was now caring for her daughter’s two small children, who traveled to the U.S. to join their grandmother.

During the consultation, the volunteer attorney advised Rosa to apply for asylum and PBRC helped her navigate the free and low-cost resources available to assist her with her case.

Throughout the pandemic, Rosa sought long-term representation for her asylum case, but was repeatedly turned down as typical asylum cases can take several years and waiting lists are long. Thanks to new funding received by PBRC, a MILAP staff attorney was able to work with Rosa. They completed her asylum application and guaranteed her eligibility for a work permit. With stable employment, Rosa finally feels secure and safe in providing for her family.
PBRC's Professional Skills Academy is a one-year, cohort-based program of training, mentoring, and service for newer attorneys (Fellows) that:

- enhances the Fellows’ lawyering skills;
- develops the habit of thoughtfully choosing and carrying out pro bono service; and
- introduces the Fellows to mentors and colleagues who can help them grow.

This year, PBRC welcomed the second class of the Professional Skills Academy. Thirteen Fellows, in many cases newer lawyers, were paired with experienced mentors and took part in a series of in-depth trainings. By the end of the experience, the Fellows’ had donated more than 400 hours of pro bono service. With their skills, experience, and connections, PBRC is building a community of pro bono leaders for the future with broad community impact.

**2021 Professional Skills Academy Fellows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asa Baitch, Esq.</th>
<th>Lu Carlson, Esq.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kristal Rovira, Esq.</td>
<td>Susan Dumont, Esq.</td>
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<td>Sekoia Rogers, Esq.</td>
<td>Kailyn Townsend, Esq.</td>
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<td>Cameron Williams, Esq.</td>
<td>Maria Apostolaros, Esq.</td>
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<td>Laila Ghauri, Esq.</td>
<td>Kayla Wilson, Esq.</td>
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<td>Sheena Hairston, Esq.</td>
<td>Muriel Tinkler, Esq.</td>
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<td>Emilie Aracil Drasher, Esq.</td>
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*[PBRC’s Academy] reminded me how much volunteering is important to me. It’s been a while since I practiced law so it was nice to get outside of my comfort zone and feel that I had the right support behind me.*

- Emilie Aracil Drasher, PSA 2021 Graduate
Maryland Pro Bono Service Awards

The Maryland Pro Bono Service Awards program honors outstanding lawyers, non-lawyers, and programs that have made significant contributions to the delivery of pro bono civil legal services to Maryland’s low-income citizens.

The 2021 recipients served in a wide range of case areas, including bankruptcy, criminal record expungement, children’s welfare, and immigration.

### 2021 Award Recipients

**Alex Fee Award**
Carin Golze, Esq.

**Judge Robert M. Bell Award**
Alicia Shelton, Esq.

**Distinguished Pro Bono Volunteer Award**
Joanna Shapiro, Esq.

**Retired Pro Bono Volunteer Award**
John Warshawsky, Esq.

**Member of the Judiciary Award**
Hon. Pamila J. Brown

**Lee A. Caplan Award**
Derek Hills, Esq. & Kathleen Hyland, Esq.

**Government or Corporate Legal Department Award**
Baltimore City Law Department

**Herbert S. Garten Special Project Award**
Nneka N’namdi,
Fight Blight Bmore

**Non-Legal or Organizational Involvement Award**
Helping Up Mission

**Law Firm Pro Bono Service Award**
Frost & Associates, LLC

**Pro Bono Program**
Latino Legal Access Program,
Community Legal Services of Prince George’s County
22nd Annual Partners for Justice Conference

PBRC’s 22nd Annual Partners for Justice Conference was held remotely for the first time in 2021, increasing accessibility for attendees as they had the opportunity to see every session from anywhere in the world.

The virtual conference included 14 panel sessions, three plenaries, four networking sessions, and a powerful keynote address by author Chris Wilson. Other speakers included Maryland's former Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Attorney General Brian Frosh, and Public Defender Paul DeWolfe. Bringing together legal services providers, government agencies, and law firms from across Maryland and the United States, the conference allowed the over 220 attendees to participate in conversations tackling various issues facing low-income service seekers in the mid-Atlantic region.

Veteran’s Legal Assistance Conference & Training

Designed for lawyers, law students, veterans, policymakers and other service professionals, the Veteran’s Legal Assistance Conference & Training provides a forum for discussion of critical legal issues facing our veterans. This event also includes a training for lawyers interested in representing veterans in claims for service-connected disability benefits, as well as training for non-attorney veterans interested in serving as mentors for the Baltimore City Veterans Treatment Docket.

In 2021, the virtual conference featured panels on veterans benefits, overpayments and other indebtedness to the VA, transitioning from legacy claims to the Appeals Modernization Act, and more.

Impact Speaker Series

In 2021, PBRC started the Impact Speaker Series. Through this series, PBRC facilitated community conversations about current events and why pro bono service matters that can be viewed by all advocates, even those without legal training or background.

The series breaks down the conversation and confusion around hot topics that surround media attention, whether that be about unaccompanied children or eviction prevention during the pandemic. The series of presentations reached over 350 community members in 2021, and can continue to be viewed for free at www.probonomd.org/impact-speaker-series.
Volunteer Appreciation

Thank you to all the volunteer attorneys who donated their time to serve at one of PBRC’s legal clinics, as well as the community of instructors who helped train a new cadre of pro bono leaders through a PBRC training.

Naomi Abankwah
Shaily Acharya
Rocio Aguilera
Jaelin Ali
Anna Allman
Maria Apostolaros
Nancy Arias
Susan Atkins
Barry Bach
Rebecca Bainum
Asa Baitch
Scott Bell
Alexa Bertinelli
Jamila Blake
Raymond Brown
Estefani Calle
Meredith Campbell
Sonia Canzater
Sandra Cardozo
Lu Carlson
Louise Carwell
Carlo Castillo
Katia Castillo
Rosy Chacon
Adrienne Chen
Sarah Choi
Denise Clark
Sarah Coffey Bowes
Austen Cohen
Cori Cohen
Carmen Corea
Gregory Countess
Seth Crisler-Smith
Louise Crissman
Stephen Cullen
Alexandra Curd
Anjanette Delgado
Angus Derbyshire
Zoraida Diaz
David Dirks
Manuelletta Dominique
Emilie Drasher
Deena Dugan
Susan DuMont
Sydney Dunning
Meg Elseread
Antonia Feldman
Julieta Fellner
Funmi Feyide John
Gavi Franco
John Gabel
Sue German
Laila Ghauri
Michele Gilman
Julie Gold
Tattiana Goluskin
Angela Grau
Reagan Greenberg
Sara Gross
Helena Guerra
Leslie Guthrie
Katherine Guzman
Sheena Hairston
Edward Hanlon
Marisa Hazell
Margaret Henn
“For me, it’s about being in the client’s corner when they feel like the entire world is against them. As lawyers, we can make a huge difference for a lot of people.”

- Chelsea Ortega, PBRC Legal Volunteer
Thank you to the following individuals and organizations who supported our work between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

**Thank you!**

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Hon. Sally Adkins
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Olajumoke Olawale
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Chelsea Ortega
Thomas O'Toole
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David Prentiss and Jenny Coneff
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Morgan Pritchett
Jessica Quincosa
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Joan Vetter
Edward Vlcek
Matthew and Caroline Vocci
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Lauren Walker
Ryan Wallach
David Wasser
Dedra Watkins
Alison Watkins
Hon. Julia Weatherly
Jack Weber
Victor Weiner
Harold Weisbaum and Sharon Krevor-Weisbaum
Leesa Weiss
Wells Fargo Foundation
Whiteford, Taylor & Preston, LLP
Evin Wick
Wiltondale Improvement Association
Leo Wise
Victoria Wol
Timothy Wolf
Portia Wood
Barbara Wootton
Thomas Wright
Ellis Wyatt
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Thomas Yeager
Mary Yost
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Daria Zane
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FY 2021 Financials
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 Unaudited Financials

Revenue

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Foundations</td>
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<td>State Government</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>Corporate</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Expenditures

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<td>Non-Personnel</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,698,999</strong></td>
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