

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland

Building Communities of Justice

Dear Friend:

PBRC experienced considerable transition this past year—moving back to full-fledged, in-person legal clinics and addressing new issues as they arose. Our advocacy around rental housing, home ownership and financial stability continues to make an enormous impact on the state's most vulnerable populations. In FY22 alone, PBRC saved clients an aggregate of \$976,658. In brief, we kept people housed, safe and financially secure.

One of the more significant changes was the new Maryland Access to Counsel in Eviction (ACE) legislation. Guaranteeing access to counsel for tenants marked a *monumental shift* in legal services, and enabled PBRC to enhance our Lawyer of the Day programs in Rent Court. In the spring of 2022, the General Assembly authorized funding to support ACE, which, through the generosity of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC), enabled us to not only further our extended representation of tenants but expand both our reach and impact. Today, any tenant seeking legal help navigating the complicated court system alone in Baltimore City or County can speak to a PBRC volunteer or staff attorney and gain immediate on-site representation without a fee.

Ensuring housing and financial stability underpin most of our work. Our other courthouse, community-based and remote in-house projects focus on relieving consumer debt, preserving home ownership, and gaining immigration status to work. **Through all its projects, PBRC closed a total of 2,427 cases with success rates ranging from 83-98%.**

As the statewide clearinghouse for volunteers, PBRC also trained and connected hundreds of probono attorneys to partner agencies impacting even more marginalized individuals and communities across the state. We engaged in important policy initiatives and advocacy, continued to lead a senior-focused home preservation project coordinated with three other non-profit partners, hosted the annual Partners for Justice Conference for several hundred advocates, sponsored 15 newly minted Professional Skills Academy Fellows, served as the intake and referral triage program for immigration court and offered technical assistance and support to the access to justice community.

At our very core, we remain determined to close the justice gap for those throughout Maryland facing socio-economic, racial and structural inequities.

We hope this annual report offers a glimpse of the impact we make. On behalf of the PBRC team and board, thank you for supporting our mission!

In appreciation,

Sharon E. Goldsmith, Esq.

Sima G. Fried, Esq. Board President

PBRC's Impact in 2022

Direct Services

PBRC offers direct services through innovative, free legal clinics in the courthouse and community, which provide immediate legal assistance to low-income Marylanders in areas of vital need such as eviction prevention, financial stability, home preservation, and immigration—areas that help stabilize families and households while closing justice gaps. In 2022, PBRC attorneys and volunteers prevailed in 83-98% of their cases.

In 2022, PBRC: -

- Provided \$443,050 in donated legal services to low-income Marylanders who lacked access to legal representation.
- Impacted **6,340 people** through our direct legal services.
- Saved clients \$976,658 in legal fees and alleged unpaid debts that could be used to spend on basic necessities.
- · Provided 2,030 hours of volunteer legal service at PBRC's clinics, helping to meet the heightened need for legal assistance.

"That's why I'm grateful for that attorney taking that pressure off of me and really just being my voice, because I'm not even sure if my voice would've been heard."

- Victoria M., PBRC Client

Professional Training & Support Services

PBRC serves as the state's premier coordinator, trainer, and support center for volunteer civil legal assistance. For over 33 years, PBRC's team has recruited, trained, and mentored volunteer attorneys and other advocates to widen access to legal services. The third annual Professional Skills Academy also presented attorney Fellows a special opportunity for diversity, inclusion and service with one-on-one mentorship and training.

In 2022, PBRC

- Trained 603 volunteer and staff advocates committed to serving low-income clients through over 35 partner organizations.
- Offered 45 legal training courses that can be accessed on-demand across many areas of law, including: Estate Planning, Immigration, Eviction Prevention, Veteran's Assistance, and more.
- · Trained 328 professionals through the Partners for Justice and Veterans Legal Assistance Conference.

Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day Preventing Homelessness Through Legal Representation in Rent Court

Tenants appearing in Rent Court are nearly always unrepresented by counsel and often unaware of their rights as renters or the legal process that must be followed prior to an eviction. A tenant with a lawyer is much more likely to prevail and avoid a life disruption than a tenant navigating the court alone: in FY22, 83% of clients represented by PBRC attorneys either avoided an eviction entirely or were granted a postponement- effectively delaying the eviction. **Pursuant to legislation** passed in 2022, all tenants facing eviction have a right to access counsel related to their eviction action, and PBRC has been instrumental in ensuring that this right can be exercised.

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. In addition, staff and volunteer attorneys help tenants remain housed through representation in more complicated actions such as tenant holding over, breach of lease, escrow or illegal eviction actions.

As the housing crisis progressed through 2022, tenants continued to struggle to maintain adequate, safe, and affordable housing. With a new law in effect securing Access to Counsel for all tenants facing eviction throughout Maryland, PBRC has been able to expand the CAP team and to more fully address the range of housing issues faced by tenants. By the end of FY22, PBRC was well on the way to establishing a presence at **all** rent court dockets in Baltimore **County** while continuing to represent tenants in rent court in Baltimore City. PBRC developed an expertise in more complicated housing-related cases brought outside of rent court.

ln 2022,

- TVLD held a total of 162 clinics at Baltimore City Rent Court and 60 clinics in Baltimore County Rent Court.
- Staff and volunteer attorneys triaged 1,491 litigants and provided day-of-court representation to 572 tenants in their eviction cases.
- 83% of clients represented by PBRC attorneys either avoided an eviction entirely or were granted a postponement - effectively delaying the eviction.
- Favorable case outcomes achieved in TVLD saved clients a total of \$690,386.

PBRC has successfully worked with clients in Tenant Holding Over, Breach of Lease and even Illegal Eviction cases, in which landlords have attempted to evict tenants without using the court process. Without the assistance of counsel, tenants facing these types of cases have very little chance of success, but with the ability to work with a PBRC or volunteer attorney, clients are often able to realize a solution that allows them to stay housed.

PBRC has continued to staff the Tenant Hotline, answering over **997** calls in FY22. Through this hotline, tenants have access to legal information, advice and referrals, which can often be the difference between staying housed and experiencing an eviction.

Lauren & Samuel's Story

How PBRC's Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day helped their family advocate for safer housing conditions for themselves.

Lauren and Samuel, a married couple with a toddler-age child, resided in a rental in Baltimore City since 2020 where the conditions were outrageously poor.

Specifically, a housing inspector found 15 violations in their apartment—there were serious structural defects, significant water damage, and interior doors were missing.

In many cases, tenants are unaware of their rights as renters, such as the right to a safe, habitable home. PBRC attorneys enforce healthy and safe living conditions by helping clients identify conditions on properties that pose serious threats to life, health, and safety.

A PBRC attorney met Lauren and Samuel as they were seeking assistance at the Baltimore City Courthouse. They already had an ongoing rent escrow case, which protects tenants when a landlord refuses to repair an unsafe living condition. Several different judges validated their claim by alleviating their rent each month as their landlord continuously failed to make repairs.

This time, however, the landlord filed a Tenant Holding Over case against Lauren and Samuel. Tenant Holding Over is one of the ways a landlord can evict a tenant by stating that the tenant has remained in their rental past the agreed upon terms of the lease.

At the hearing, the PBRC attorney successfully advocated for Lauren and Samuel as the judge once again abated the rent, and strongly encouraged the landlord to resolve the case as it had been going on for an unconscionable amount of time.



Afterwards, PBRC helped Lauren and Samuel negotiate a settlement wherein they had no judgment against them, were able to move to another rental without issue, and even received cash payment from the landlord for moving expenses.

Ultimately, Lauren and Samuel were provided with a lifechanging sense of peace and the ability to continue raising their family in a safe and habitable home.

Robert's Story

How PBRC's Consumer Protection Project helped Robert set the financial goals he wanted and negotiated with the creditor to make this a reality.

Robert arrived at PBRC's Consumer Protection Project clinic with an alleged outstanding debt from a Target credit card. Elderly and living on a fixed income through social security and disability, he last paid towards the debt in 2019 but could not afford to pay any more.

Previously, Robert had a partner with whom he could share living costs. Now, he was handling all expenses by himself while experiencing the additional hardship of managing his cancer treatment.

In situations like Robert's, PBRC would typically request a hardship dismissal, where the entire debt is forgiven due to outstanding obstacles in someone's life, including unexpectedly losing a job. Since Robert owned his home, however, a hardship dismissal was not an option.

Thus, the PBRC attorney handling Robert's case spoke to him about a possible settlement available to him. Robert was eager to agree on a payment plan with the creditor as he wanted to begin paying off his debt and lifting this heavy burden from his shoulders. However, after his bills, he only had \$35 to spend on himself.

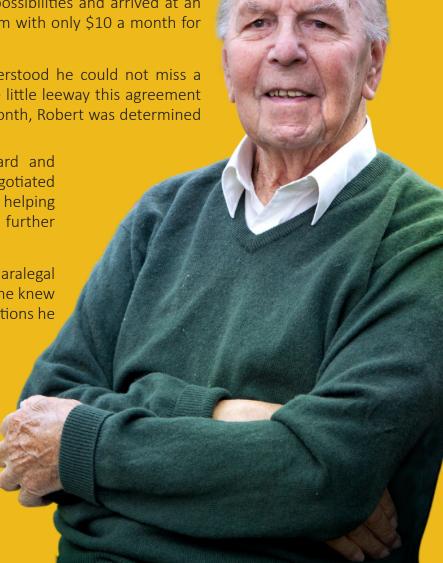
Robert and his PBRC attorney discussed the possibilities and arrived at an offer of a monthly payment of \$25, leaving him with only \$10 a month for emergencies.

The PBRC attorney ensured that Robert understood he could not miss a payment if he agreed to this deal. Despite the little leeway this agreement left him for extra money at the end of each month, Robert was determined to see his debt paid off in a timely manner.

With Robert's authorization to move forward and advocate on his behalf, the PBRC attorney negotiated a settlement as well as a stipulated dismissal, helping Robert to avoid a judgement as well as any further court visits.

After the negotiations concluded, a PBRC paralegal helped Robert file his paperwork and ensured he knew that PBRC was there for him for any other questions he had even after his court visit.

Robert expressed how grateful he was that PBRC was there to not only help him manage and problem solve his debt issues but help him towards his long-term goal of attaining financial stability and security.



Consumer Protection Project

Resolving debt lawsuits to avoid crippling judgments.

Each year, tens of thousands of individuals are sued on affidavit 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. They have been summoned to appear in court yet often aren't sure about the basis or legitimacy of the debt at issue, which may have been bought and sold many times prior to their court date.

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 jobs 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 and provide legal representation at 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.

ln 2022,

- Provided extended representation that helped 98% of CPP clients achieve a favorable outcome in their case, such as dismissal or reasonable payment plan.
- Saved \$254,054.11 for CPP clients so their hard-earned dollars could support necessities like food and shelter.
- Advocated for 433 consumers through day-of court representation at in-court and remote legal clinics.



"This client, a responsible borrower, was facing many debts he accumulated, but his current health issues prevented him from continuing his excellent payment history. The client was in hospice care with stage 4 cancer. Although the dismissal didn't require much work on my part, listening to the client's family...and securing the hardship dismissal was very rewarding."

- David Dirks, CPP Volunteer

Home Preservation Project

Building equity in communities by preserving intergenerational rosealth

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 FY22, our team accomplished this goal through 43 remote and community-based clinics in estate planning, tax sale prevention, and mortgage foreclosure counseling, benefiting 146 homeowners.



Clinics

"This work is interesting because it is a wonderful way to meet and directly affect the lives of individual clients in a relatively discrete way. The entire experience has been rewarding as the work is tangible and concrete - at the end of the clinic, the client has a will, advance directive, and power of attorney that they can leave with." - Hanna Sheehan, HPP Volunteer

At HPP's Estate Planning clinics, our attorneys offer free life planning services, including the creation of advanced medical directives, wills, and financial powers of attorney to community members. In 2022, we hosted estate planning clinics across Baltimore City, from Poppleton to McElderry Park to Govans.

In the late winter, the HPP team mailed postcards to homeowners behind on their property taxes, inviting them to participate in a free tax sale prevention clinic or remote consultation. Clients received one-on-one consultations with a pro bono attorney, as well as education about other resources, such as programs offering direct financial assistance for property tax delinquencies, homeowners' property tax credits, energy or water assistance, and housing repairs.

Advocacy

Notably, in April 2022, together with our coalition partners, we successfully advocated to the Mayor of Baltimore to remove all owner-occupied properties from the tax sale lien auction, giving 2,900 City homeowners a reprieve and additional time to resolve their delinquencies. Our team continues to lead the way in efforts to reform the system.



During the spring, the HPP team revived our foreclosure counseling project and expanded our team to include members dedicated to this work. We are now offering this valuable counseling service in conjunction with our estate planning clinics at all our Baltimore City events, as well as holding standalone foreclosure clinics in Baltimore, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties.

Marianne's Story

How PBRC's Home Preservation Project helped Marianne stay in her home of 22 Years.

Marianne, a 68-year-old woman, came to a Home Preservation Project clinic as she needed help with completing her estate planning documents. During her consultation, a PBRC attorney learned that she had delinquent property taxes and was very worried about losing her home, which is her only asset, to tax sale.

Marianne owned her home for 22 years and no longer had to pay the mortgage. Since her monthly income is \$1,157, which is food stamps and social security, she consistently qualified for and received the homeowners tax credit and relied on it to be able to afford her property tax bill. After the credits, she owed either nothing or less than \$100 depending on the year.

For many years, Marianne had been going to a local outreach center for help with her income taxes. This year, she went for additional help with her property taxes because she was concerned about the effect the stimulus check money would have on her homeowner's tax credit application. She met with the local center in April, and they told her that they would complete the forms for her tax credits. She didn't hear back from them for a while, and she kept calling and calling but

couldn't get an answer. She later found out that the

person who assisted her quit.

In December, Marianne was shocked to receive a tax bill for over \$2,455. She panicked—she could no longer could afford to stay in her home.

PBRC reached out to the Tax Credit Programs Manager at the Maryland State Department of Assessments & Taxation, and described the situation. Within a few hours, PBRC received a response that they would grant Marianne a retroactive credit.

Since Marianne does not have internet or a printer, PBRC took the applications to her house for her to complete and gathered her additional documentation in order to scan and submit the materials on her behalf.

> That day, Marianne had confirmation that her application was accepted, bringing her bill down to zero.

Jenny's Story
How the Maryland Immigrant Legal Assistance Project Helped Her Attain
Safety & Stability in the U.S.

While living in Honduras, Jenny's husband was murdered. Through her courageous testimony, his murderers were put in jail.

However, after one of them was released from prison, they came looking for her to get their revenge.

Fleeing for her safety, Jenny left Honduras for the United States. She first lived in Atlanta, Georgia for a few months before she settled down in Maryland. Initially, her court case was scheduled to take place before the Atlanta Immigration Court, which is notoriously known for its low asylum approval rates.

One week before her deadline to file her asylum case, Jenny connected with MILAP at their in-court clinic. Over the course of that week, the MILAP team worked oneon-one with her to help gather documents for her case, prepare her asylum application, and file a motion to change her court case venue to Maryland. Finally, MILAP helped to overnight her application to the immigration court.

Now that she has a pending asylum application, Jenny is eligible for a work permit, allowing her to continue solidifying her life free from violence or fear in the United States. Importantly, with MILAP's astute help, Jenny's case will now take place before the Baltimore Immigration Court, saving her time and money. It will also be easier for her to find a free attorney for her case because, without the venue change, she would have been ineligible to receive services from many of the local nonprofits.



Maryland Immigrant Legal Assistance Project

Connecting immigrants to help and hope.



Legal representation continues to be the most important determinant of success in an immigration case—yet there is no right to appointed counsel in immigration proceedings. Without an attorney, immigrants with valid claims to remain in the United States may 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 clinics in Maryland's two immigration courts, serving as the first line of defense for hundreds of immigrants per year. The team also provides direct representation to particularly vulnerable children and families at risk of missing important deadlines in their cases. Specifically, MILAP helps asylum-seekers complete their application, recent arrivals to Maryland change their court location to Maryland, and children to obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status before they become too old to apply for this special pathway to residency.

In 2022, PBRC provided 529 consultations to individuals at risk of deportation and assisted with completing 72 applications for asylum or other important forms, records requests, or motions.

The team completed this work remotely until resuming their regular presence at Baltimore Immigration Court in the spring of 2022, and launching a new clinic at the new Hyattsville Immigration Court.

When new policies were announced this spring that permitted the government attorneys to agree to a dismissal of cases as a matter of prosecutorial discretion, MILAP obtained dismissals for 12 children within just two days at court of providing same-day representation. MILAP is now working with one of those families to get the child Special Immigrant Juvenile Status without the threat of having to go to immigration court.



A drawing a child client drew of MILAP Paralegal, Edison Lopez, during intake.

"[The attorneys] clear our doubts and give us many tools to put a case before a judge. They explain well the opportunities that exist and how and where to look for help. Thank you very much." - Anonymous MILAP Client

Community Training & Events



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 2022 recipients helped in a wide range of case areas, from family law, consumer rights, children's welfare, tax help and tax sale foreclosure prevention, to immigration status. In 2022, recipients were acknowledged at the MSBA Legal Summit in Ocean City (June) and at PBRC's Block Party: Building Communities of Justice (September).

2022 Award Recipients

Alex Fee Award Neel Lalchandani, Esq.

Judge Robert M. Bell Award Rosalyn Otieno, Esq.

Distinguished Pro Bono Volunteer Award Bill Meyer, Esq. & Deena Dugan, Esq.

Retired Pro Bono Volunteer Award Russell R. "Ronnie" Reno, Jr.

Magistrate Joanie Raymond

Member of the Judiciary Award

Lee A. Caplan Award Elizabeth Johnson

Herbert S. Garten Special Project Award Latino Racial Justice Circle

Non-Legal or Organizational Involvement Award Arlene Grove, Wash-Balto Tax Prep

> Law Firm Pro Bono Service Award Baldwin, Briscoe & Steinmetz

> > Pro Bono Program Child Justice



For the first time since 2019, the legal services community was able to convene in-person at the Partners for Justice Conference to discuss critical access to justice issues, including panels centered around racial justice and equity, empowering survivors of violence, and criminal record expungement.

The over 230 participants also heard from notable speakers such as Chief Justice Matthew Fader, Justice Angela Eaves, Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, and Public Defender Natasha Dartigue. The May 26th event culminated in a keynote address delivered by Jenny Egan, who spoke on the strides Maryland has made to achieve juvenile justice while reminding participants of common-sense changes that can still be made.



PBRC's Professional Skills Academy is a one-year, cohort-based program of training, mentoring, and service for newer attorneys (Fellows). With training and the help of a mentor, Fellows have the opportunity to gain litigation skills, including how to interview clients, negotiate with other parties, represent clients in court, and counsel and draft documents for clients.

This year, PBRC welcomed the third class of the Professional Skills Academy. Fifteen 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 over 400 hours of pro bono service.

2022 Professional Skills Academy Fellows:

Kimberly Boyd Thaakirah Cason Phillip Dehoux David Dirks Jasmine England-Caesar Sam Freudenburg Alana Glover Amelia Grant

Natalie Jean Michelle Johnson Daniel Lim Ariel Martin Robert Mitchell Debra Salim Carla van Beek



Designed for lawyers, law students, veterans, policymakers and other service professionals, the Veterans 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.

On June 17, 2022, the conference presented a hybrid in-person and virtual model that featured panels on discharge upgrades, military medical malpractice claims, how to prove claims involving racism, legislative updates, and more.



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 Paul Ackerman Kate Adcock Rezwan Ahmed Susan Akins Sadia Ali Robert Anbinder Tasnima Apol Meghan Ashley Jennifer Avala Barry Bach Josephine Bahn Jordan Bailowitz Joan Bellistri Owen Bement James Benjamin Victor Berger Trevor Bernard Jay Bernstein Caitlin Best Keisha Bishop Neisha Blagrove Catherine Bledsoe Taua Blockson

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Caroline Cooper

Curtis Cooper Carmen Corea Danielle Covington Adam Crandell Judd Crane Michael Cranston Meghan Crawford Molly Cross Michael Curley Tim Darby Natasha Dartigue **Donald Davis** Phillip Dehoux Alona Del Rosario Angus Derbyshire Christopher Dews Apurva Dharia Zoraida Diaz Lauren DiMartino David Dirks Thanh Doan Van Doan Manuelletta Dominique Katherine Donnelly Benjamin Donoghue

Kimberly Boyd

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Johanna Eisenberger Raenetta Ellison Hassan Elsouri Jessica Emerson

Jasmine England-Caesar Leonard Englander Matthew Fader Jason Fiegel Helaine Fingold Jamie Fisher Thomas Fisher Marcela Fleming Dean Fleyzor Christopher Flohr Alexis Foxworth Susan Francis

Stephen Freeman

Sima Fried

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Robin Murphy Flavia Negrete

Michael Nertheimer

Ryan Nolan Jim O'Brien Jeffrey Oden Eshigo Okasili Chelsea Ortega Matt Paavola Dave Pantzer Christina Pappas Yvette Pappoe Michelle Pardo Khamal Patterson Qiusha Peng Christine Peterson Sieglinde Peterson Amv Petkovsek Irina Pletneva **Emily Poor** Daniella Prieshoff Jessica Quincosa Jennifer Rakes Leah Ramirez

"I find that the clients are so grateful for PBRC's support and appreciate someone being there for them. The clients appreciate someone just hearing their story and being willing to stand up in court with them. It's so rewarding to feel like you gave someone assistance who felt helpless."

- Debra Salim, PBRC Legal Volunteer Claudia Randall Gretchen Reimert Feamma Reyes James Richardson Dena Robinson

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Sheronda Rose
Elizabeth Rosen
Benjamin Rubin
Daniel Rubin
Laurence Ruth
Abbas Sadiq
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Xin Taylor
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Alice Young Daria Zane Gina Zentz Marla Zide

Thank you!

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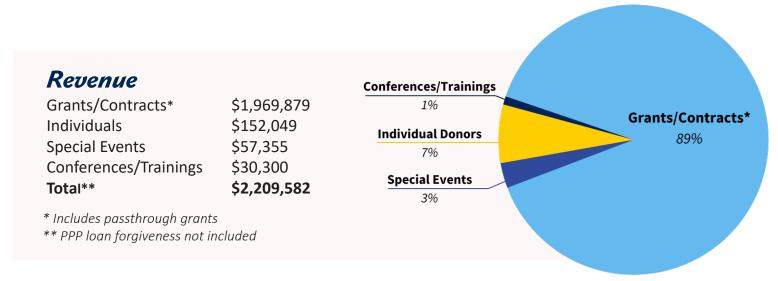
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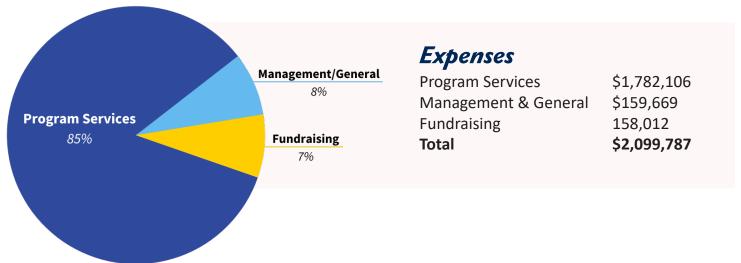
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