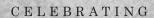
# probono.net

## ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 18

We equip legal advocates, community organizations and the public with cutting-edge tools to identify and address civil justice problems.





## Letter from the Executive Team

Every day, countless low-income and vulnerable people face eviction, garnishment, foreclosure, deportation and other life-changing events, too often without benefit of counsel, knowledge of their rights, or even an understanding of the language in which their case is being heard. This justice gap has a profound effect on individuals and communities living on the economic margins, and undermines America's promise of equal justice under the law.

Pro Bono Net's work is driven by the belief that transformative strategies and new cooperative efforts are needed to dramatically expand access to justice, and to create opportunities for vulnerable communities to exercise and protect their rights. For 20 years, our comprehensive programs have enabled legal aid organizations to maximize their impact, increased pro bono involvement, and empowered the public through legal information and self-advocacy tools. From our roots as an online resource for volunteer lawyers in New York to a national organization with remarkable reach, we have been a catalyst for change and driver for long-term, sustainable results.

Through innovative technology strategies, we create economies of scale, better integrate existing resources and services, and build capacity in the nonprofit legal sector. As you'll read in the pages that follow, we are also able to step in during times of national crisis and when there is an emergent need, providing technology and online resources to help the legal community respond with greater speed and efficacy to these events. Our initiatives span a continuum of services, from legal self-help to full representation models. We're proud that our national network encompasses more than 200 leading civil legal aid programs, immigrants' rights groups, pro bono initiatives and court innovators.

In the coming years, we will continue to expand our network, building new partnerships with both legal aid partners and community-based organizations to make our legal system a more accessible and responsive tool for all communities. Thank you to all of our partners, supporters and friends who believe in our mission, support our work and share our commitment to equal justice. Together we can continue to create powerful new tools and collaborations to tackle pressing justice problems, and help millions of people access life-changing legal help.

## Mark H. O'Brien, Executive Director

## Liz Keith, Program Director

**Pro Bono Net's mission** to increase the capacity of justice organizations to respond to emerging legal needs is more relevant today than ever. We equip legal advocates, community organizations and the public with cutting-edge tools to identify and address civil justice problems. Our programs and collaborations dramatically expand access to justice on a national scale.

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## **Building Pro Bono Sector Capacity**

The probono.net network includes more than 30 national, statewide and regional justice initiatives, managed by leading nonprofit legal aid organizations, pro bono programs, disability rights groups, voting rights organizations, immigrant rights groups and more. These organizations use the probono.net platform to build cross-sector collaborations, equip lawyers and advocates with cutting-edge advocacy tools, and mobilize thousands of volunteers to help individuals and communities resolve legal issues.

Over the past two years, Pro Bono Net has introduced new mobile-centric user experiences and volunteer engagement tools across this network to better serve our diverse and growing advocate community. Examples of the new mobile-friendly designs and tools, co-designed with legal aid and bar partners in Massachusetts, Minnesota and New York, include massprobono.org, projusticemn.org and probono. net/ny. Several of the new sites offer mobile-friendly practice toolkits and online checklists, created using new authoring tools available on probono.net, to aid volunteer attorneys and legal aid advocates in quickly getting up to speed on a new area of law, and support issue-spotting and advocacy in on-the-go settings such as clinics and settlement negotiations.

In 2018, we also partnered with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society to launch LegalAidProBono.org, a new pro bono engagement and support initiative to expand access to legal assistance for low-income and vulnerable residents of five counties in the metro Atlanta region.

"Legal Aid is excited to launch the website because its features make it dramatically easier to connect volunteers to meaningful pro bono opportunities. Users can quickly browse projects to find work that fits their needs, schedule, and interests while supporting critical legal needs of clients in Metro Atlanta and around the state," says Director of Pro Bono Legal Services Laurie Rashidi. "This is an amazing tool that expands the scope of pro bono by matching client need with volunteer skill and, in doing so, helps us close the justice gap and provide equal access to all."

## National Disaster Response Field Support and Network-Building

2017 and 2018 were unprecedented years for weather and climate-related emergencies in the US, many of which disproportionately impacted low-income and vulnerable communities. In the wake of these events, legal aid programs help survivors rebuild their lives and navigate the road to recovery, including obtaining disaster benefits, overcoming displacement, making insurance claims and much more.

Over the past two years, Pro Bono Net leveraged our technology expertise, resources and national networks to aid in near-term legal response efforts on Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and María, and other emergencies such as the California wildfires. We also significantly expanded our national disaster legal response infrastructure, centered on DisasterLegalAid.org, to build capacity and resilience for future disaster and rapid-response scenarios.

In the summer of 2018, we launched a Disaster Legal Aid Advocacy Center to network public interest legal advocates responding to disasters, and share advocacy resources and tools across regions. More than 260 advocates joined in just four months. In partnership with Lone Star Legal Aid, we held monthly roundtables led by subject matter experts in cross-cutting issues around the delivery of free legal services to disaster survivors. More than 700 participated in 46 states, and the series continued into 2019. We continue to work closely with field partners in disaster-affected regions to support local response efforts and to coordinate national networking and information-sharing to ensure disaster survivors have access to vital legal help.

"Thank you, Pro Bono Net, for all the resources provided in 2018. Please keep it going, as it is helpful for our attorneys and staff"

- Director of External Relations, Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i

National Disaster Legal Aid Resource Center www.disasterlegalaid.org

National Disaster Legal Aid Advocacy Center www.disasterlegalaid.org/advocates



## Ensuring Justice in Post-Hurricane María Puerto Rico

In the aftermath of 2017's Hurricane María, Puerto Rico was devastated, and its residents were desperately in need of immediate services. Leading up to the recent hurricanes, Puerto Rico was facing a humanitarian crisis. The territory was billions of dollars in debt and austerity measures were instituted, shutting down essential services. More than 45% of the population lived in poverty, and a housing crisis was continuing to increase, with eviction rates rising by nearly 30%.

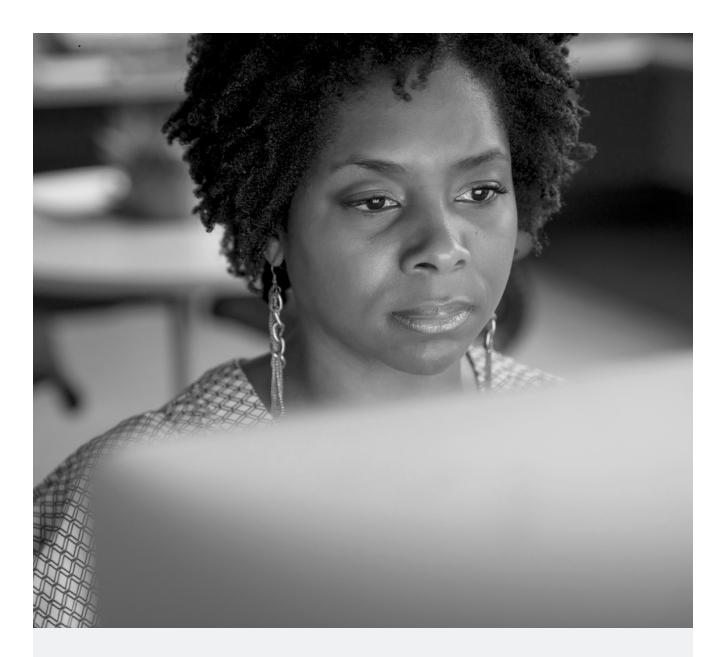
Ariadna M. Godreau Aubert, Executive Director of Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico (www.ayudalegalpr. org), in longstanding partnership with Pro Bono Net, was present in Puerto Rico during Hurricane María in 2017. In the immediate aftermath, Ariadna contacted Pro Bono Net for assistance, creating Ayuda Legal's online legal rights resources and digital outreach strategy for María survivors and pro bono volunteers, including a dedicated section of AyudaLegalPR.org with vital information for hurricane survivors and advocates assisting them. These resources have also supported the work of "brigades" of pro bono attorneys, law students and community organizers, coordinated by Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico, who conducted dozens of disaster legal rights workshops and clinics throughout Puerto Rico in the months after María.

As founding partner of the Ayuda Legal Huracán María (Hurricane María Legal Help) Coalition, we also networked Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico leaders with public interest, private bar, and law school allies on the mainland to provide critical legal and strategic support, and to enhance coordination between response efforts in Puerto Rico and displaced survivors in New York, Florida and other regions. Since October of 2017, Ayuda Legal Huracán María has provided thousands of individuals with information on legal rights under FEMA along with other rights and tools to help those suffering legal problems during disaster recovery.

Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico www.ayudalegalpr.org

Ayuda Legal Huracán María www.ayudalegalpr.org/ayudaparadesastres





## LawHelpNY Expands LiveHelp Collaboration with New York Courts

LiveHelp is an online chat service on LawHelpNY. org, designed to help website visitors find the information they need to solve their legal problems. Under the supervision of a LawHelpNY staff attorney, LiveHelp volunteers chat with users to direct them toward relevant self-help materials, legal services organizations and court information. Primarily, the program is staffed by law students, law graduates and volunteer attorneys.

Each year, more than 100 trained volunteers, primarily law students and law graduates, chat with users to help them find the information they need on LawHelpNY.org and AyudaLegalNY.org. In 2016, the service was expanded to select pages of the New York Court's CourtHelp website and, in 2017, it was expanded onto the Families and Children section of CourtHelp. Since the expansion onto CourtHelp, there has been a significant increase in the number of people requesting chat assistance. We consistently now field more than 800 chats a month to help people navigate LawHelpNY resources and provide referrals.

www.lawhelpny.org





### Providing Real-Time Legal Help to New Yorkers

Like many New Yorkers, Sara was struggling with a housing issue. After informing her landlord of her intent to move out of her apartment, her landlord asked for the keys so he could rent it to others and promised to move her belongings into storage until she could move them. Unfortunately, the landlord then stopped answering calls and didn't rent the apartment, effectively holding Sara's belongings hostage.

In desperation, Sara went to LawHelpNY.org for more information. Through the LiveHelp chat service available on the site, Sara was connected to Don. Don asked a few questions to understand the situation, and then directed her to resources that might help her situation. He provided her with information on illegal lockouts, involving the police or the courts if necessary. He also provided contact information for organizations she could call with questions or if she needed an attorney.

In New York City, 54% of low-income households spend more than half their incomes on rent.

Finding and keeping affordable housing is a constant struggle for many. While it is illegal for building owners to force their tenants to leave their apartments, lock them out illegally or surrender their rights, landlords will often resort to these tactics. Losing housing can create a snowball effect for low-income New Yorkers, leading to homelessness and a cycle of debt and poverty that becomes difficult to escape. Legal assistance and self-help resources can be instrumental in combating illegal lockouts by unscrupulous landlords and keeping people in their homes.

Every month, LiveHelp volunteers enable thousands of New Yorkers like Sara to access information and resources on LawHelpNY and find referrals to legal aid and pro bono organizations that may be able to help. These issues can be overwhelming, which is why we provide direct connections to trained legal volunteers. With a little guidance, Sara was on her way to recovering her belongings and solving her housing issues.

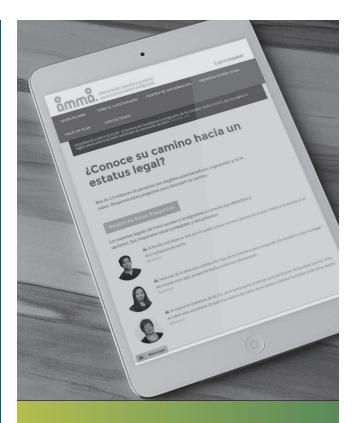
## immi.org

Originally launched in November of 2016, Immi is a free online resource available in both English and Spanish. An estimated 15 to 20% of the 10 to 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. are eligible for legal status. Immi's interactive quiz asks questions about family, immigration history and circumstances to help them identify the options. The site provides additional plainlanguage articles on immigration law, legal rights, how to get good legal help and more. It has a directory of more than 1,000 nonprofit legal service providers, searchable by location. In its first year, more than 100,000 people visited Immi. Nearly half of those on the site used the personalized screening interview to find out if they might qualify for legal immigration status. In the United States, an estimated 10 to 20% of undocumented immigrants have legal options, but do not know it. Immi helps them find out more.

"We created Immi to empower immigrants. Plain language is essential if we want people to understand the law and their rights."

- IAN Associate Director Pat Malone





## #STANDWITHIMMIGRANTS Campaign

Nearly 11 million of our friends and neighbors are at risk of deportation. That is why we, along with leading immigrants' rights organizations, launched a new campaign in 2017 to engage lawyers and other professionals around the country in skillbased volunteering to protect the rights of immigrants. This national campaign connects lawyers, mental health professionals, translators, interpreters and others ready to use their skills to protect the rights of immigrants, to expert training, advocacy, volunteer opportunities and support.

#STANDWITHIMMIGRANTS and take the pledge! www.standwithimmigrants.org

The Stand With Immigrants campaign is a collaboration of Pro Bono Net, Immigration Advocates Network, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC), The Advocates for Human Rights, and UnidosUS.

## #STINDWITHIMMIGRANTS



## **Legal Navigator Pilot**

Pro Bono Net is partnering with Microsoft, LSC, the Pew Charitable Trusts and justice communities in Alaska and Hawaii to develop and pilot Legal Navigator, a next-generation legal access platform to help people find the right resources to resolve their legal issues. Legal Navigator aims to bring together three key elements— technology, content and community—to provide better legal information for regular people, and better referrals to service providers that can help.

In 2017, Alaska and Hawaii were selected as the pilot jurisdictions for the initiative. These particular states were chosen because of their demonstrated track records in establishing new and collaborative resources for meeting civil legal needs; their embrace of technology's potential to expand access to legal assistance; and their vision of partnering with allied non-legal networks such as social services, public libraries, and health care institutions to help people identify and resolve their legal issues and related social needs. Microsoft recently completed the development of Legal Navigator's Artificial Intelligence module that will be used to help individuals and advocates determine whether their issue has a legal component and what resources can help. The initial pilots will be rolling out soon. Stay connected through our blog as we work with the courts, legal aid partners, and other justice community innovators in Alaska and Hawaii to simplify the process of finding legal help.

Visit simplifyinglegalhelp.org

LSC America's Partner for Equal Justice LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION







## **Empowering Self-Help in the DC Courts**

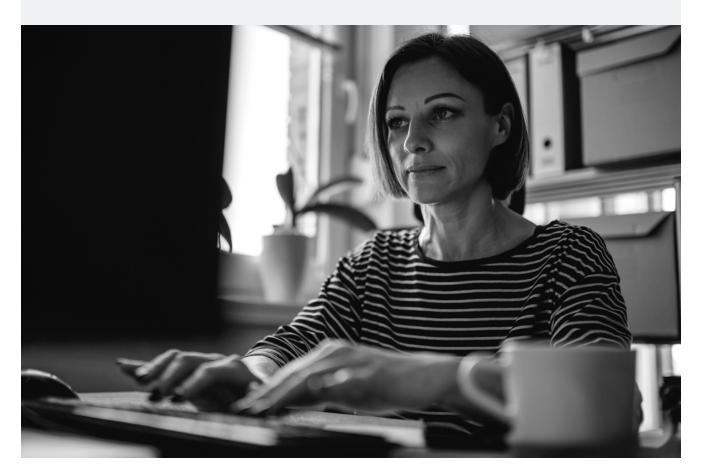
Over the past two years, people have created more than 1 million legal forms and documents through our award-winning document assembly platform. The impact of this program continues to grow through new partnerships every year. For example, in 2017 Pro Bono Net was awarded a multi-year contract to provide document assembly solutions for the DC Courts with an emphasis on expanding services for self-represented litigants. By December of 2018, the DC Courts launched Forms Help Online, a document assembly solution to expand services for self-represented litigants using LawHelp Interactive.

Forms Help Online is one of two initiatives to enhance access to justice for DC residents announced by DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin in December. The Court Navigator program will assist individuals who are unrepresented by attorneys with navigating the court system, not just geographically, but also in terms of figuring out which office or division can best assist them, and which forms to fill out. This program will work in conjunction with Forms Help Online to increase access to justice for those who cannot afford an attorney in DC. Pro Bono Net, in collaboration with Capstone Practice Systems, oversaw the development of the automated forms, while subject matter experts from more than five external access-to-justice stakeholders provided input on interviews and instructions. Through the project, we were also able to make significant improvements to LawHelp Interactive's security posture to bring the system more in line with Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) standards, opening up the platform to more new opportunities in the future.

"These two new initiatives will make the court campus and process easier to navigate and help those without attorneys to fill out forms more easily. Our foremost goal is a system in which self-represented parties can easily find where they need to be and what they need to do."

- Chief Judge Robert Morin, DC Superior Court

For more information, visit www.dccourts.gov/FHO

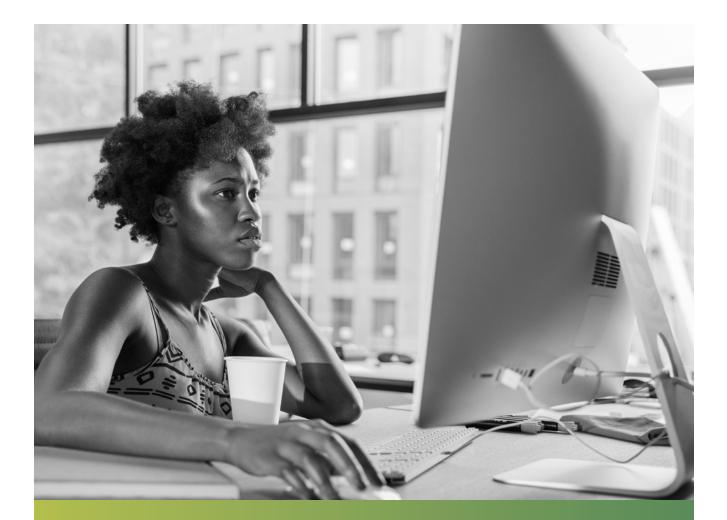


## **Expanding Resources for Elder Justice**

According to the National Council on Aging, approximately 1 in 10 Americans age 60 or over has experienced some form of elder abuse or financial exploitation, but studies estimate that only 1 in 14 cases are reported to authorities. Elders who have been abused have a higher risk of death than those who have not been abused, and the estimated cost of elder financial abuse and fraud is more than \$3 billion annually.

In the fall of 2017, the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime awarded Pro Bono Net a grant to expand online tools that enable innovative partnership and outreach models to identify, respond to and remedy elder abuse and financial exploitation. In partnership with the Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ), this project is refining and scaling online legal forms, powered by the LawHelp Interactive (LHI) program (www.lawhelpinteractive.org), that help mitigate and protect against common forms of elder abuse and financial exploitation. Pro Bono Net is also expanding the use of our Legal Risk Detector, a web-based screening app that enables social workers, nurses and other professionals in aging to conduct "legal health check-ups" to assess the needs of homebound, disabled and isolated seniors. The Risk Detector is able to virtually walk non-attorney navigators through a series of questions to help spot issues commonly faced by the elderly in areas such as consumer, housing, abuse and financial exploitation, and immediately refer elderly individuals to legal services to address any indication of a legal issue or vulnerability.





## **Expanding Access to Legal Help for Crime Victims**

Pro Bono Net is proud to announce the launch of a new online network, crimevictimshelpny.org, to connect victims of crime such as domestic violence, abuse and identity theft with free civil legal information and assistance in New York, and to build the capacity of providers assisting them. New York Crime Victims Legal Help was developed in partnership with the New York Office of Victims Services, Empire Justice Center, and the Center for Human Services Research. Initially serving Erie, Genesee and Niagara counties, it will expand to 57 counties in 2019.

New York Crime Victims Legal Help offers a userfriendly online resource to ensure victims of crime can find and understand the information they need in legal matters pertaining to housing, family law and safety concerns. The website's screening tool and legal help directory help connect crime victims with advocates and nonprofit legal organizations that may be able to assist them. The site leverages referral information sourced from LawHelpNY.org, and offers LiveHelp information and referral-finding assistance staffed by law student volunteers recruited and trained by LawHelpNY to provide trauma-informed services to victims seeking assistance through the website. We look forward to working with our partners on this effort to expand the site's capacity to reach more victims statewide and to strengthen the essential work of legal advocates and nonprofit organizations assisting them.

"Too often, we see crime victims struggling to pull their lives together in the months and even years after they've been victimized. Many times, they are unsure of the assistance they need or unaware of the legal resources that are available. This website will be a beacon for these individuals—a place where they can easily learn about their rights as a crime victim and locate critical legal resources to help them navigate civil matters."

- Office of Victim Services Director Elizabeth Cronin

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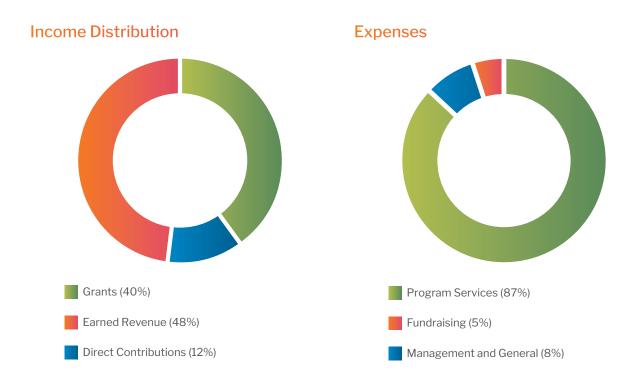
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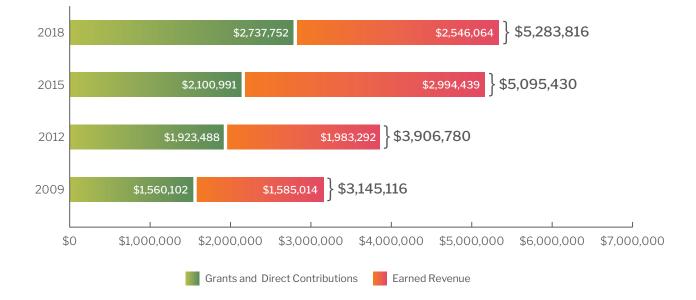
Stephen Warnke and Susan Sommer

Elias Woloski

## **2018 FINANCIALS**



## Grants and Direct Contributions/Earned Revenue



## **STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

## For the Year Ending December 31, 2018

_	2018		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE			
Contributions	\$620,792	\$1,767,450	\$2,388,242
Donated software	\$15,565		\$15,565
Donated goods and services	\$333,945		\$333,945
Interest and other income	\$0		\$0
Program fees	\$2,021,081		\$2,021,081
Product subscription fees	\$524,983		\$524,983
Net assets released from restriction	\$2,052,330	(\$2,052,330)	-
Total support and revenue	\$5,568,696	(\$284,880)	\$5,283,816

EXPENSES			
Program services	\$5,274,378		\$5,274,378
Management and general	\$499,675		\$499,675
Fundraising	\$332,525		\$332,525
Total expenses	\$6,106,578	\$ <b>0</b>	\$6,106,578

NET ASSETS			
Beginning	\$382,196	\$1,724,662	\$2,106,858
Change in net assets	(\$537,882)	(\$284,880)	(\$822,762)
Ending	(\$155,686)	\$1,439,782	\$1,284,096



## LawHelp.org









