A Message From Our Leaders

We are pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report for the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP), highlighting some of the legal accomplishments that you helped make possible. Thank you!

Because of your support in 2018, more than 1,500 individuals received help with legal matters that could likely end or prevent their homelessness and thousands more lives will change with new and improved policies to end homelessness.

The Annual Report shares the following stories of this important work:

**HPRP’s Clean Slate Project:** By eliminating barriers to employment and housing through expungement of an individual’s criminal record, HPRP’s clients reported obtaining new employment and increased earnings;

**Homeless Youth Initiative:** Successfully championed legislation with youth with lived-experience, creating the state’s first grant program to provide housing and supportive service to end youth homelessness;

**Economic Justice Program:** Collaborating with Catholic Charities, obtained the first increase in state benefits for persons with disabilities in 15 years; and

**Pro Bono Program:** Over 500 volunteers provided free legal assistance in more than a dozen legal clinics across the state.

This work is only possible because of you and the support of many volunteers, donors, foundations, and community partners.

Together, we are working to end homelessness in Maryland.

2018 At A Glance

**Action**

1,143 cases closed, affecting 1,750 people

**Impact**

HPRP clients recovered $229,485 in benefits in 2018

**Service**

518 attorneys, paralegals, & law students volunteered 2,290 hours in pro bono services, valued at $475,280
Case and Program Highlights

HPRP opened 1,505 cases and closed 1,143 cases in FY2018. These cases constitute matters in which HPRP staff or volunteers represented people struggling with homelessness in legal disputes to prevent or end homelessness.

Case by Level of Service

- Representation - Judicial Litigation
- Counseling
- Negotiations
- Brief Advice Info & Referral

Ending Homelessness for Individuals

Some criminal charges can be removed, but the expungement process is complicated and costly. HPRP’s Clean Slate Project helps by providing free legal representation to expunge records of non-convictions and convictions for nuisance offenses and other misdemeanors. In 2018, over 500 expungement cases were completed.

When someone is facing homelessness, help navigating the legal system can be life-changing. Free legal representation can often help break the spiral of homelessness by eliminating barriers to stable housing, income, and employment – all major factors in preventing and ending homelessness.

Consider, for example, employment. Access to gainful work is part of the solution to homelessness, but many individuals know from experience that a criminal record is a significant barrier when seeking a job. Some employers will not even consider an applicant for a position because of the existence of a criminal charge, even if the charge did not lead to a conviction.

When HPRP opened the Clean Slate project, it found that in as little as 2 to 5 months following expungement, 50% of HPRP’s clients found employment and nearly 1/3 reported an increase in earnings in the same short period of time.

Employment has a direct impact on housing, employability, and overall well-being. The personal effect of expungement can be dramatic. “I felt like a huge burden was lifted,” said one HPRP client. “[I] cried tears of joy. I was elated,” said another.

Clearly, this legal work has a tremendous impact on an individual’s life and future.
Ending Homelessness Through Policy

Direct legal representation helps individuals and families prevent and end homelessness. Their cases and experiences inform and support efforts to create public policy solutions to prevent homelessness in the first place.

2018 Accomplishments

**Homeless Youth Initiative**
HPRP’s Homeless Youth Initiative, together with youth who have experienced homelessness, led a grassroots effort to pass **Maryland’s Ending Youth Homelessness Act**. This major legislation creates Maryland’s **first statewide grant program for housing and supportive services for youth experiencing homelessness**. The legislation will protect and support our most vulnerable youth, ensuring they have access to the housing and services they need for a stable transition to adulthood.

**Stable Income**
HPRP, in collaboration with Catholic Charities, drafted successful legislation to increase the benefit level of the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP). TDAP is available to adults who are unable to work because of a disability. In FY2020, the monthly TDAP benefit will go from $185 to $215, and will increase each year over 8 years until the benefit level matches the Temporary Cash Assistance program, currently $306. This law **marks the first time in over 15 years that the TDAP benefit has increased** and will help thousands of Marylanders with disabilities.

Linda Kennedy Fellowship

The Linda Kennedy Fellowship in Advocacy honors the late Linda Kennedy, Esq., a courageous and determined advocate for persons with disabilities and persons without housing. Linda was a champion for equal treatment of our clients and neighbors who struggle with homelessness. Her tireless work, particularly with people seeking to overcome barriers to housing and employment imposed by criminal records, had a significant impact in our community. Linda provided critical representation to our clients in their efforts to expunge arrest records and resolve collateral issues related to criminal records. Linda’s deeply caring manner with which she addressed the needs of each client was special. The Linda Kennedy Fellowship in Advocacy provides a second or third year law student with an internship at HPRP to work on policy and systemic issues that promote an end to homelessness in Baltimore City and in Maryland.

The 2017-2018 Linda Kennedy Fellow, **Meegan Smith**, was a second-year student at the University of Baltimore School of Law. During the 2018 General Assembly session, Meegan was integral to HPRP’s successful efforts to pass the Ending Youth Homelessness Act (EYHA). Meegan conducted policy research, solicited co-sponsors and met with legislators, provided advocacy skills trainings to youth leaders, planned bill hearings, and even secured donated “House Our Youth” t-shirts that became the trademark of the EYHA coalition. She also provided written and oral testimony related to several issues, including a locally-funded rental assistance voucher program.

The 2017-2018 fellowship was generously supported by:
- Anonymous
- Lenna Kennedy
- Debra Saltz
In 2018, 518 volunteers donated 2,290 hours of service to HPRP clients, valued at $475,280.

These volunteer attorneys, paralegals, and law students ensure that individuals and families have access to legal assistance that can directly eliminate or prevent homelessness.

For example, thanks to pro bono attorneys, Mr. K, a veteran once facing homelessness, now has stable housing and stable income. Mr. K was unable to work due to serious mental health and autoimmune issues related to his military service. He received medical treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but no financial support. After advocating on behalf of Mr. K for over three years, his attorneys were successful in obtaining the benefits and compensation Mr. K had earned. Mr. K received a $50,000 back award and life-time monthly compensation of $2,915.55 from the VA, ensuring that he will never again face homelessness.
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Volunteer Appreciation Reception

On May 1, 2018, HPRP held its annual volunteer appreciation at The University of Baltimore Angelos Law Center, whose generous sponsorship helped to make the event possible. Awardees in the following categories were presented with artwork created by clients of Health Care for the Homeless, one of HPRP’s community partners.

Outstanding Volunteer Attorneys

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Law Office of Hasan Z. Mansori

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The 2018 Annual Campaign raised $333,358.42.

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