2021 ANNUAL REPORT
The Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) helps low-income immigrants improve their legal status and works for more just and humane laws and policies affecting immigrants.

Cover photograph by Molly Haley
Jocelyne and her children, 2018
Dear Friends,

With the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, unjust immigration laws, and systemic lack of support for migrants, ILAP continued its core services over the past year while managing new initiatives and projects to adapt to unexpected and urgent needs. We also worked closely with Maine’s immigrant-led organizations and other partners to advocate for changes that would create a fair and just immigration system.

In 2021, ILAP staff and volunteers provided direct legal services and outreach to over 3,000 clients and reached thousands more through our robust website with translated self-help materials. Over 200 attorneys on our Asylum and Immigrant Children’s Project Pro Bono Panels donated 4,000 hours of their time, representing 261 clients in their asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases.

We made progress towards our strategic plan goals with new and expanded projects to adapt to growing needs. During the first year of our Immigrant Children’s Project, we recruited and trained a panel of volunteer attorneys who helped dozens of vulnerable young people apply for legal status. We expanded our geographic presence with a larger and more centrally located Lewiston Office and combined virtual and in-person outreach through our Rural Maine Project.

As unexpected and urgent needs arose, we responded quickly with special projects to address them. Through our Mendez Rojas Project, we provided screenings, consultations, and legal assistance to more than 150 asylum seekers who may qualify as class members of the settlement agreement. Last fall, we launched an Afghan Project to help Mainers with loved ones in Afghanistan and new arrivals in Maine who were evacuated from the country. We continue to work alongside Maine’s Afghan community to advocate for better immigration options for those evacuees.

Throughout the year, we worked alongside our local and national partners in the immigrant justice movement and used our expertise and experience to advance the policy priorities of Maine’s immigrant communities.

Thank you for your partnership and support!

Sue Roche, Esq.
Executive Director

Alicia Curtis, Esq.
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Listings current as of August 2022

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Human Resources Director  Danny Muller
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(she/her)  Senior Asylum Program Attorney

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3,199 immigrants in Maine received legal support from ILAP in 2021

- 1,669 attended 83 community legal education events
- 450 people received full representation by an ILAP staff or pro bono attorney
- 246 people received immigration forms assistance
- 834 people received legal advice during a consultation or brief intervention

2,500+ translated information packets for seasonal workers
4,000 hours donated by pro bono attorneys
28,000 unique visitors to our website
71 mentions in the media
Immigrant Children’s Project

The U.S. government does not provide attorneys to children at any point during their immigration cases. ILAP launched our Immigrant Children’s Project because we believe no one, especially young people, should face our country’s unjust immigration system alone. 2021 marked the first full year of this project.

The Immigrant Children’s Project aims to increase legal support for young people in Maine. ILAP most commonly helps youth pursue “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status” (SIJS), a complicated process involving state court and federal immigration agencies. SIJS is a pathway to permanent residency and can create life-changing opportunities in a child’s life, including access to financial aid for college and protection from deportation.

A central component of this project is the development of a Pro Bono Panel dedicated to representing SIJS cases in Maine state courts. In 2021, pro bono attorneys donated 1,180 hours, and together with ILAP staff, helped over 150 young people. ILAP worked to train and mentor a group of pro bono attorneys at the Portland law firm Preti Flaherty. Michael Messerschmidt, who comes from a family of immigrants, was among those who stepped up. “My family was welcomed here, so I wanted to return the favor,” he reflected.

Immigrant youth face many systemic barriers, including a years-long backlog. In a national report published in 2021, Immigrant Children’s Project Attorney Maggie Loeffelholz explained, “We’ve had concerns that people who are in the backlog would be ordered deported while waiting for a green card.” In response, ILAP joined the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, a national group of directly impacted youth and allied advocates calling for permanent protections for immigrant youth.

Maine State Legislative Session

ILAP understands that being an advocate for immigrant rights also means we must actively advocate for racial, economic, and gender justice. Injustice in the criminal legal, health care, education, and other systems has a disproportionate impact on our clients, more than 90% of whom identify as people of color.

“During the 2021 Maine Legislative Session, ILAP testified alongside our...
partners to advance equity and justice in our state. “As immigration attorneys, we see the disparate impact of the criminal legal system on our clients,” said former ILAP Advocacy and Outreach Director Julia Brown in one testimony.

During this unprecedented session, the leadership of organizations like Presente! Maine, Maine Immigrants’ Rights Coalition (MIRC), ACLU of Maine, Maine Equal Justice, Preble Street, and Maine Youth Justice fought to ensure that immigrants are valued and treated justly in our state.

As a result, Maine successfully passed legislation to pilot racial impact statements, collect data on racial profiling, provide income support and interest-free loans to eligible immigrants, expand MaineCare funding for immigrants who are pregnant or under 21, and support people experiencing homelessness, among other exciting advancements. We did this all while soundly defeating anti-immigrant proposed bills.

While immigration law and policy are determined federally, ILAP continues to be committed to advocacy on all levels of government because we know state and local laws, especially those related to racial and criminal justice, greatly impact Maine’s immigrant communities.

Kabul’s capture by the Taliban put thousands of Afghans in harm’s way and left Afghans around the world, including here in Maine, desperately searching for options to help family and friends find safety. Readied by more than 25 years of experience, ILAP was able to launch a rapid response, working alongside many others who stepped up to support Mainers with loved ones in Afghanistan and Afghans evacuated to the U.S.

Since last summer, ILAP has been collaborating with the Afghan Community of Maine, MIRC, Catholic Charities of Maine, and Maine Law’s Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, as well as many volunteer lawyers and others.

Afghans, like all people fleeing war and persecution, deserve an opportunity to rebuild their lives safely and with dignity. So many have not been afforded this chance because the U.S. immigration system has failed to meet the urgent needs of this situation. In addition to supporting direct legal needs, ILAP continues our advocacy efforts to push for permanent solutions.

**Afghanistan Project**

ILAP is only as strong as our partners, and we are grateful to be in collaboration with so many inspiring organizations and people around the state.

The strength of this network was particularly evident in Maine’s response to the humanitarian crisis following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent Taliban takeover in Aug. 2021.

As ILAP Afghanistan Project Attorney Catherine N. Lindgren explained, “We are working to ensure Afghan evacuees can start their lives in the U.S. confident about their futures and with a clear path to citizenship.” ILAP also joined hundreds of other organizations calling for a path to safety for those who remain in grave danger in Afghanistan and third countries.
2021 FINANCIALS

For transparency and accountability to our donors and supporters, ILAP undergoes annual external audits. The following information is from audited financial statements for January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021:

**REVENUE**

- Donations & special campaigns (52%) $1,690,754
- Grants (26%) $851,269
- In-kind contributions* (22%) $715,792
- Events, fees, interest & other revenue (<1%) $4,009

**TOTAL** $3,261,824

**EXPENSES**

- Program* (88%) $2,313,712
- Fundraising (8%) $225,308
- Management & general (4%) $95,807

**TOTAL** $2,634,827

**CHANGE IN ASSETS** $626,997

*In-kind Contributions and Program Expenses include the value of donated pro bono attorney time.

**This year’s surplus was planned and has been rolled over to 2022 to fund ongoing expansions identified in our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.**
ILAP equally values all gifts of time, money and expertise, which is why this year you will see everyone who supports our work listed together - without categories to separate us. We are grateful to each and every one of you, including those listed and those who’ve chosen to remain anonymous.

If anyone has been inadvertently omitted from this list, please know it was not intentional.

**Thank you for partnering with ILAP to advance equity and justice for immigrants in Maine!**

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ILAP donors can choose to dedicate their donation “In Honor of” or “In Memory of” someone important to them. Help us celebrate those who were honored and remembered throughout 2021.

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