



# 2020 Impact Report

Legal Aid Society  
of San Mateo County



*challenging*  
**We are living in *inspiring* times.**  
*defining*

In the face of the pandemic, many are experiencing an avalanche of hardships and we are all dealing with difficult emotions. For our low-income neighbors, the pandemic has compounded perils to their security, health, and well-being. With so many facing significant loss of income or threatened with eviction, the Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County had to adapt quickly to serve the large influx of clients. I'm so proud of the hard work our team continues to do. They faced a new set of challenges with passion, such as the digital divide many of our clients face, and quickly organized with local groups to advocate for policies that protect families.

**That is the power of community.**

**More importantly, that is the same power you bring to our community.** By investing in Legal Aid SMC, you provide free legal services to the low-income communities who have the least access to an attorney. And in a time when having a home and the security of healthcare is crucial, your giving ensures that your low-income neighbors have a place to go for help.

During the past few months, we've seen the flaws in our safety net systems laid bare. Though we know many of our supporters are facing their own economic uncertainties, you've chosen to step in and demonstrate the power of community. Because of your commitment to justice, Legal Aid SMC continues to provide legal services that everyone deserves, regardless of their financial situation. Over the last year, you've ensured that justice through our legal system is accessible for over two thousand families. **Thank you.**

The challenges our clients and community face are far from over. But I hope you are inspired, as I continue to be, by all the kindness and generosity we've seen during a time of great need for so many. It is only through local action and support that we can create a more just world for all of us.

**Thank you for choosing to support our community.**

Sincerely,



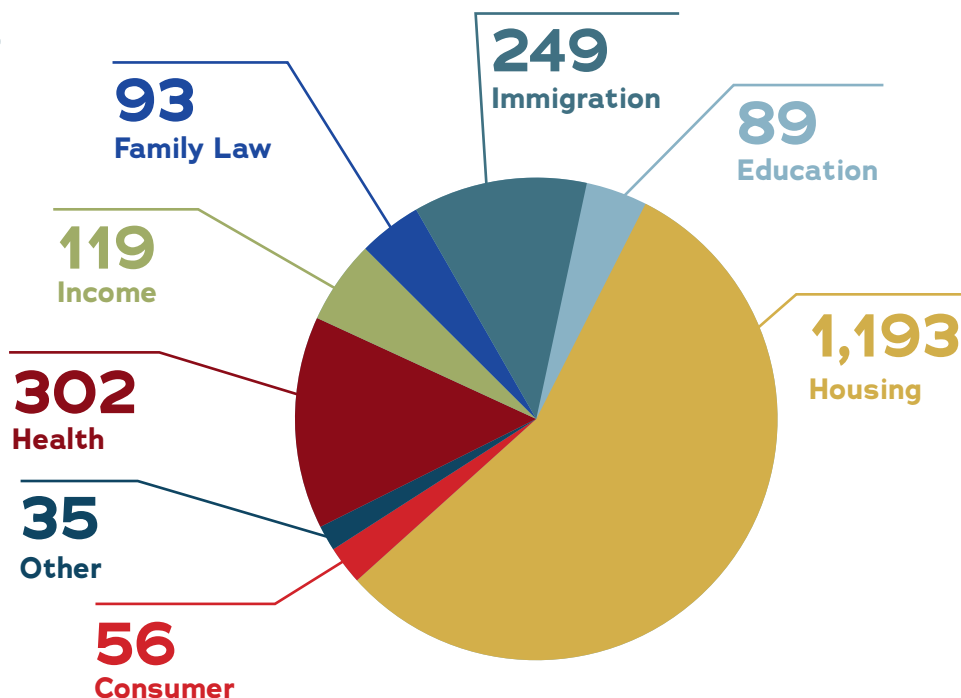
M. Stacey Hawver  
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# Your Impact in 2020

## CASES OPENED

# 2,136

Between 1st of July 2019  
and 30th of June 2020.



## You're removing barriers to education

Micah is an 8th grader who has struggled with school work for a while. Though he had been provided with some additional support at school and was making progress, he really needed more one-on-one guidance. When the pandemic hit this spring, Micah's progress stalled. Like children across the country, Micah was expected to adjust to a whole new school experience, but for Micah this change was especially disruptive. His virtual schooling didn't take into account his personal learning challenges or his ongoing mental health needs. Micah's stepfather was his only support at home and he was struggling to support Micah's unique learning needs with his own work from home responsibilities.

Thanks to you, Micah's stepfather had somewhere to go with his questions. He came to Legal Aid SMC for help. Legal Aid attorneys were able to work with the school to ensure that Micah received an appropriate education that addressed his needs. Because of your gift, Micah is receiving individual instruction through a school that can better address his learning and mental health needs. Your gift got Micah's education – and future – back on track.

## You're keeping families housed

Han and his wife are an elderly couple that have lived in their home for 40 years. While his wife was recovering from a serious illness, they received a 90-day eviction notice. Han was concerned he didn't have enough time to save up for the moving costs or find a new home that would accept their Section 8 voucher. Concerned for his wife's health and overwhelmed by the situation, Han turned to Legal Aid SMC for help.

Your gift helped Han connect with an attorney at Legal Aid SMC who explained Han's legal rights, including new statewide protections for tenants. The attorney empowered Han to advocate for himself and negotiate with the landlord. When Han's landlord tried to pressure him with the threat of a lawsuit, the Legal Aid attorney stepped in to advocate for Han and his wife. As the pandemic slowed Han's case and posed an additional threat to his wife's health, Han and his attorney successfully negotiated with the landlord to have more time to move. Thanks to you, Han and his wife have had time to plan for a safe move. Han has found a new home and will receive help covering the costs of the move.

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## Households Served



**597**

Include  
a Person  
with a  
Disability



**986**

Include  
a Child



**610**

Headed  
by a  
Senior



**129**

With a  
Survivor of  
Domestic  
Violence

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**\$24,000**

**Median Income  
of Legal Aid Clients**

**\$113,776**

**Median Income  
of San Mateo County**

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**\$373,135**

**Saved for Clients**

**\$413,996**

**Recovered for Clients**

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## **You're protecting immigrants' rights**

Brenda is an elderly immigrant client who lives in a community specially designed for seniors. She relies on various safety net programs to help her remain in the apartment she calls home. Last year, Brenda's cash assistance was unexpectedly terminated which threatened her home and wellbeing. Struggling to find a way to make ends meet, Brenda turned to Legal Aid SMC for help.

The Legal Aid attorney reviewed Brenda's case and discovered that while determining Brenda's eligibility for the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, the County was incorrectly including some of Brenda's other benefits in their calculation. This made it appear that Brenda had more financial resources than she really did. Over several months, Brenda and her attorney worked with the California Department of Social Services to show that Brenda's denial was inconsistent with past decisions. They also connected with other attorneys and advocates to show that Brenda's was not the only overlooked case. CDSS realized that the specific guidelines used to determine eligibility were leaving many elderly immigrants without access to a crucial resource and committed to correcting the guidelines. Thanks to your support, Brenda's benefits have been reinstated and seniors across California will have access to an important program meant to help people like them!

# Thank you for your generous support

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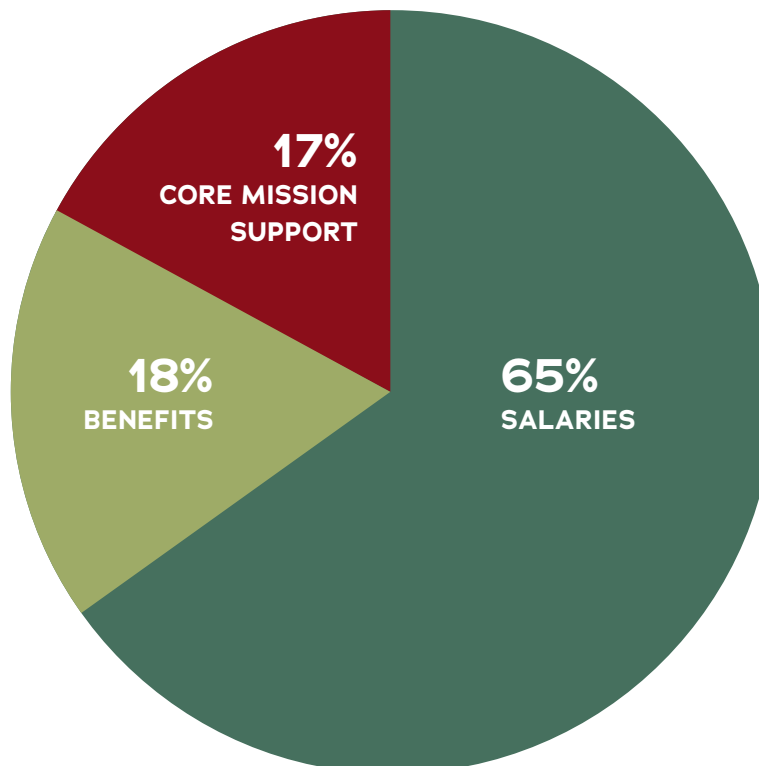
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