

# 2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

## BENDING THE ARC TOWARD JUSTICE



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND  
ECONOMIC JUSTICE  
*Serving Greater Boston Since 1968*

[www.lawyerscom.org](http://www.lawyerscom.org) | [@LawyersCom\\_MA](https://twitter.com/LawyersCom_MA)

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## MISSION AND HISTORY

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice is a non-profit, non-partisan organization formed to marshal the resources of the legal community to address racial and national origin discrimination throughout Massachusetts. For over four decades, the Lawyers' Committee has worked to safeguard the civil, social, and economic rights of our constituencies. We handle impact litigation as well as legal actions on behalf of individuals. We also engage in community economic development, community education, and public advocacy.

Founded in 1968, the Lawyers' Committee was the first of eight local affiliates of the Washington-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a national organization formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal representation to address racial discrimination. In 1973, the Lawyers' Committee became the first *pro bono* project of the Boston Bar Association and was the only Lawyers' Committee in the country affiliated with a major bar association. Although the organization is now separately incorporated with its own 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, the Lawyers' Committee continues to maintain strong ties to the private bar.

Membership by private law firms in the Lawyers' Committee still forms the working foundation of the organization. Member firms fund a significant part of our annual operating expenses and provide millions of dollars in *pro bono* legal services by co-counseling with the organization. In this way, the Lawyers' Committee has for decades harnessed the resources and legal talent of Boston's leading law firms to secure the civil rights of area residents.

The Lawyers' Committee has grown, adding new projects and initiatives to fit the changing face of discrimination. While working closely with an ever-increasing number of community partners, it has always remained true to its core mission to challenge discrimination.

*"The proof that one truly believes is in action."*

BAYARD RUSTIN



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, our mission is the complete elimination of discrimination. I know firsthand the importance of our mission.

Throughout my life, I have lived, learned and worked in low-income and minority communities facing complex legal and social challenges. The Lawyers' Committee exists to tackle these challenges and to help create the type of world – full of justice, equality and opportunity – that all families and children deserve.

In 2016, we were the first legal organization in the country to call for Airbnb and Amazon to root out discriminatory practices. As the internet economy grows, we are tackling new forms of discrimination. Our efforts led Airbnb to adopt reforms to protect thousands of renters across the country, and we are now proposing reforms to Amazon.

With our *pro bono* allies, this year, we provided free legal support to over 200 small businesses – engines for economic growth in our Commonwealth.

We also stood up for students' rights tackling identity-based bullying, promoting diversity and ensuring that all our children have access to high-quality educational opportunities in safe and welcoming schools.

From our historic role in desegregating Boston's public institutions to our ongoing efforts to combat discrimination in education, housing, employment, public accommodations, and voting, we have a rich history to build on, and we are dramatically expanding our work to make it even more diverse, inclusive and impactful. In the words of Maya Lin, the designer of the Civil Rights Memorial:

*"Our lives are given meaning by our actions – accomplishments made while we are here that extend beyond our own time."*

### **Iván Espinoza-Madrigal**

*Executive Director*

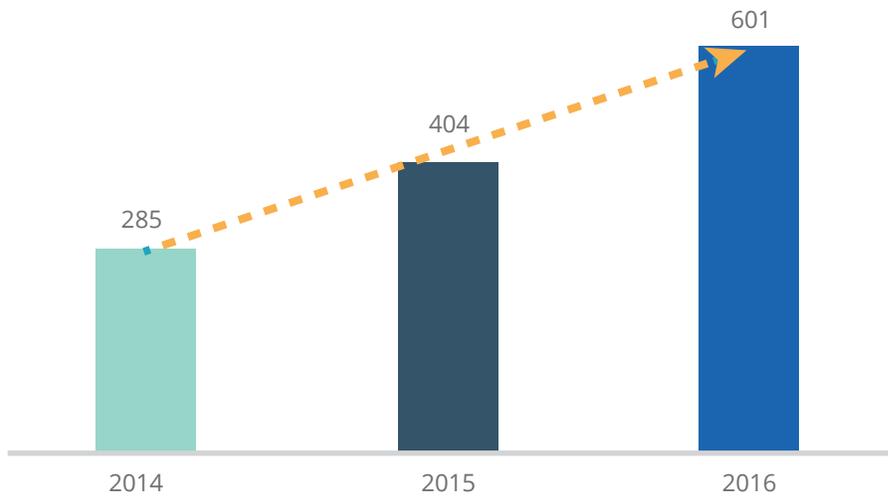


Lawyers' Committee Staff (left to right): Priya Lane, Oren Sellstrom, Alexa Marin, Matt Cregor, Laura Maslow-Armand, Iván Espinoza-Madrigal and Sophia Hall

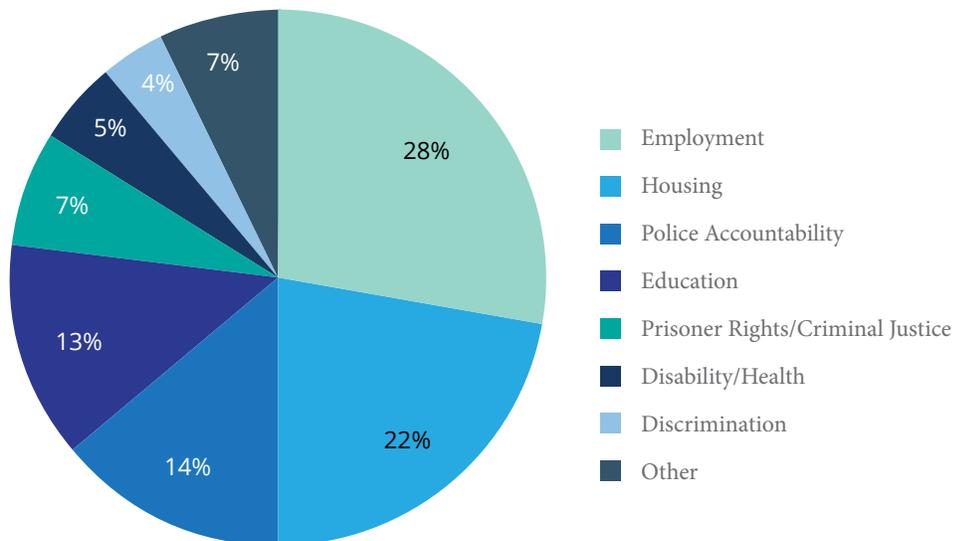
## WHO WE SERVE

As LCCR increases its visibility in the community and as needs grow, the number of individuals contacting us for assistance has been growing exponentially. LCCR serves some of the most vulnerable populations in the Commonwealth providing representation, counsel and advice, and referrals on a broad range of issues faced by low-income and minority communities.

### INTAKE STATISTICS



### 2016 INTAKE BREAKDOWN



## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

As voting rights remain under attack throughout the nation, the Lawyers' Committee has continued to act on behalf of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable populations by leading programming that will protect the rights of every voter, speaking out against barriers and advocating for legislation that will modernize the election process.

### MASSACHUSETTS ELECTION PROTECTION

Election Protection is the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition, operating in 22 states. As we have in past years, the Lawyers' Committee again spearheaded Massachusetts Election Protection in 2016, to help ensure that all eligible voters in the Commonwealth have equal access to the ballot box. This year's program was our largest effort to date.

Massachusetts Election Protection consists of a state-wide toll-free hotline and a comprehensive field program. The hotline, housed at **WilmerHale** and staffed by volunteer attorneys from our Member Firms, was answered throughout Election Day so that eligible voters were able to receive the assistance that they needed to ensure their ability to vote. The comprehensive field program placed a record 500+ volunteers on the ground in communities throughout the Commonwealth to assist voters and serve as eyes and ears for the Election Protection command staff. Our partners in this effort included: **ACLU of Massachusetts, Anti-Defamation League, Common Cause Massachusetts, MassVOTE,** and the **League of Women Voters Massachusetts.**



## VOTE EARLY, AND EVEN EARLIER

BOSTON GLOBE  
EDITORIAL

*“The Boston-based Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, which also criticized the funding veto, says early voting ‘is particularly crucial for communities of color and low-income communities.’”*

## EARLY VOTING

Early voting was passed in the Commonwealth as part of a legislative reform package in 2014, and signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick, in an effort to modernize the election process and increase accessibility for eligible voters throughout the Commonwealth. Early voting is critical for communities of color and low-income communities for whom work and family challenges make it difficult to access the ballot box on Election Day. Despite its clear importance, in late July 2016, a mere three months before early voting was due to begin, Governor Baker vetoed \$1.2 million dollars that the Legislature had allocated for implementing early voting. The Lawyers’ Committee immediately spoke out against the funding veto. Our opposition was highlighted in a Boston Globe editorial, and the Legislature soon responded by overriding the veto. The Lawyers’ Committee is also a member of the Election Modernization Coalition, a group of allies who have tracked the early voting progress of the Commonwealth’s cities and towns, recognizing those municipalities that went above and beyond the requirements of the law to offer early voting during evening and weekend hours as well.

## AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

In an effort to continue modernizing the election process, the Lawyers’ Committee testified in favor of House Bill 4097, Automatic Voter Registration legislation. Approximately 700,000 eligible residents throughout the Commonwealth are unregistered, the overwhelmingly majority of whom live in urban areas with high levels of poverty. Through public testimony before the Joint Committee on Election Laws, the Lawyers’ Committee advocated on behalf of the thousands of eligible voters who would benefit from the legislation.



Staff Attorney Sophia Hall with other Election Modernization Coalition members at early voting awards ceremony.

## EDUCATION PROJECT

Since *Morgan v. Hennigan*, Boston's school desegregation case, the Lawyers' Committee has worked to protect the civil and educational rights of Boston students. Today, the Lawyers' Committee continues its fight for equal educational rights by advocating for fair school discipline, seeking to dismantle and prevent racially hostile school environments, and promoting racial equity in school funding.

### COUNTERING RACIAL HARASSMENT AND FOSTERING RACIAL DIVERSITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

Our transformative work at Boston Latin School this year exemplifies our approach to using legal tools to help promote racial tolerance and diversity in our public schools.

When a group of African-American students at Boston Latin School – the oldest public school in the country – gave voice to the racial harassment they had experienced, we were proud to provide legal support for them and the teachers and alumni who joined them in calling for change. The Lawyers' Committee partnered with the **Boston Branch of the NAACP, the ACLU of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Advocates for Children** and others in filing a federal complaint with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Following an in-depth investigation, the U.S. Attorney found the school violated Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – the same statute used to litigate scores of desegregation cases in the South – in failing to respond to racial harassment. As a result, Boston Public Schools agreed to three years' of federal oversight at Boston Latin as the school trains staff and students in addressing racial harassment, implements fair and preventative discipline practices, and conducts an annual survey of its racial climate. This advocacy reminds us that we, as a city and nation, still have much work to do to ensure that all students are safe and welcome to pursue their equal right to education. The Lawyers' Committee and its allies will be monitoring implementation of the agreement to ensure all Boston's students – not just those at Latin – benefit from these practices.

Our advocacy at Boston Latin highlights how racial harassment is often the result of racial isolation. While Black and Latino students comprise around 75% of enrollment in Boston Public Schools, they make up less than 20% of Boston Latin's student body. We are calling for a change to Boston Public Schools' exam school admissions policy, to ensure that qualified students of color are not excluded from the schools because of overly restrictive admissions criteria and other artificial barriers. Our city's prospects are brightest when its students - and future leaders - can learn from and with each other. As discussed below, the U.S. Supreme Court continues to offer us a roadmap for improving the diversity of our public schools.

### PROMOTING RACIAL DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEBUNKING THE "MISMATCH THEORY"

This year, in *Fisher v. University of Texas II*, the U.S. Supreme Court once again affirmed the importance of racial diversity in our colleges and classrooms. In its second review of the case in three years, the Court accorded greater deference to universities in promoting racial diversity.

## BOSTON LATIN NEEDS MORE DIVERSITY

BOSTON GLOBE  
EDITORIAL

*"We know the harm racial isolation causes," says Matt Cregor, of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice. "When you're made to be the only person in the room of a certain color of skin or national origin, that's a tremendous burden."*

## WITH REMARKS IN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION CASE, SCALIA STEPS INTO 'MISMATCH' DEBATE

NEW YORK TIMES

*"Mr. Sellstrom called the mismatch theory 'paternalistic,' and said that the concern Mr. Scalia's remarks raised for him was that, 'At root he does not believe that students of color belong at elite institutions. I hope that's not the case, but the tenor of the remarks certainly suggests that that is underlying his thinking.'"*

## WE ARE TACKLING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE ISSUES WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM:

Hyams Foundation

Alice Willard Dorr Foundation

Massachusetts Bar Foundation

An *amicus* brief that the Lawyers' Committee filed helped shape the national discussion on the importance of diversity in our public universities and secure the Court victory. At oral argument in *Fisher II*, the late Justice Scalia questioned whether African-Americans were better off at "slower-track" schools that were not "too fast for them." His remarks echoed the "mismatch theory" that hypothesizes that affirmative action harms students of color. Fortunately, together with our *pro bono* allies at **Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.**, we had submitted an *amicus* brief in *Fisher II* on behalf of renowned empirical scholars who thoroughly debunked this theory. Our brief was prominently featured in the New York Times and other media outlets in the wake of Justice Scalia's comments. When the *Fisher II* decision was handed down, upholding the use of race as one of many factors in admissions, not even the dissenting Justices attempted to resurrect the mismatch theory.

Similarly, with our partners at the **Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law** and **Arnold and Porter**, we are proud to represent student *amici* in opposing a lawsuit brought by the group behind *Fisher* that challenges Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions.

## ENSURING SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITY FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR, STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

The Lawyers' Committee represents a group of students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners, together with the **New England Area Conference of the NAACP** and the **Boston Branch of the NAACP** in *Doe v. Peysers*, a lawsuit challenging Massachusetts' cap on charter schools. Our clients oppose the lawsuit because the cap is necessary to preserve educational opportunities for students in traditional public schools. Working with our *pro bono* partners at **Anderson & Kreiger, LLP**, the **Center for Law and Education, META, Inc.**, and **Rom Law, P.C.**, we demonstrated to the Court how charter schools divert millions of dollars from traditional public schools each year, yet serve proportionately far fewer students with disabilities and English language learners and impose harsher discipline on students of color. The Lawyers' Committee briefed and presented oral argument in support of Attorney General Maura Healey's successful motion to dismiss the suit. The plaintiffs have appealed the dismissal.



Juan Cofield, President of the New England Area Conference of the NAACP, with our Education Project Director, Matt Cregor discussing *Doe v. Peysers* on Boston Neighborhood Network News.

## SUPPORTING PARENTS AND STUDENTS AS THEY SEEK TO CHANGE DISCIPLINE AT THEIR SCHOOLS

Given the harms that come from out-of-school suspension and its disparate use on students of color, the Lawyers' Committee pays particular attention to school discipline. In 2014, the Lawyers' Committee released *Not Measuring Up: The State of School Discipline in Massachusetts*, a first look at our state's readiness to implement our new school discipline law, Chapter 222. Since then, out-of-school suspensions have thankfully dropped in Massachusetts for every student group. But significant racial and disability-related disparities remain. Moreover, some families are reporting that their schools are sending children home without any of the due process rights the new law accords them. To make sure the new law is properly implemented, in 2016, the Lawyers' Committee released a toolkit to support families' efforts to improve discipline at their schools. The toolkit is an eye-catching visual piece that communicates the essentials of the law in a way that is accessible to students and families. The Lawyers' Committee was proud to partner with high school students in the **Boston Student Advisory Council** and *pro bono* attorney **LaShanda Chirunga** in developing the toolkit and the **Graphic Advocacy Project** in designing it. We are providing free trainings to interested students, families, and community members on these discipline rights. For more information, please visit [www.lawyerscom.org/not-measuring-up](http://www.lawyerscom.org/not-measuring-up).

### Restorative Justice (RJ)

<p>RJ engages all members of a school community affected by a conflict in resolving it.</p>	<p>Students work together to identify the harms caused.</p>	<p>Students identify harms to individuals and to community.</p>
<p>Students develop and implement solutions.</p>	<p>RJ repairs problems and relationships better than suspensions.</p>	<p>RJ has led to decreases in suspension and reductions in racial discipline disparities!</p>

**Measuring Up**  
How to make sure your school complies with Massachusetts student discipline laws

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE  
Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)  
Graphic Advocacy Project

Excerpt from our new school discipline toolkit.

## WITH RECENT FIRINGS, AMAZON DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BOSTON DRIVERS OF COLOR, ATTORNEYS SAY

BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

*“We want to give Amazon the opportunity to come out in front of these issues,” said Ivan Espinoza-Madrigal, pointing to Airbnb, which agreed to take steps to address discrimination by hosts after his group raised concerns about discrimination against minority renters.”*

## TACKLING DISCRIMINATION IN THE INTERNET AGE

As the internet economy grows, the Lawyers’ Committee is increasingly called upon to combat new forms of discrimination faced by our client communities. We have responded and are successfully combining legal and public pressure to force change.

### AIRBNB: REMEDYING NEW FORMS OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

In 2016, the Lawyers’ Committee was the first legal organization to call upon federal agencies to take investigatory and enforcement action to ensure that Airbnb and its hosts fully comply with civil rights laws. Our open letter to Airbnb’s CEO cited evidence that Airbnb renters with distinctively African-American names are approximately 16% less likely to be accepted by Airbnb hosts than renters with distinctively White names. We noted that scores of Airbnb users from communities of color had come forward to tell their individual stories of discrimination at #airbnbwhileblack. We also pointed out Airbnb’s potential legal liability under the federal Fair Housing Act, for failing to take steps to minimize discrimination on its site.

In response to our letter and increasing public pressure, Airbnb hired a team of experts, including former Attorney General Eric Holder, to examine the problem of discrimination by Airbnb hosts and specifically asked LCCR and other civil rights groups for assistance in developing solutions. The far-reaching reforms ultimately adopted – such as reducing the prominence of user photos, hiring a dedicated full-time product team to fight bias, and increasing rentals that are automatic and require no host approval – will help minimize discrimination on Airbnb’s platform and preserve opportunity for thousands of renters of color. We are proud to have played a key role in effecting these positive changes.

### AMAZON: ROOTING OUT DISCRIMINATORY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

We took on another internet giant in 2016, with *pro bono* support from Fair Work, P.C., calling out Amazon for its discriminatory employment practices that bar qualified individuals from being Amazon delivery drivers based not on job performance, but rather solely on past contact with the criminal justice system. In the Boston area, these new policies resulted in the mass termination of dozens of Amazon drivers, primarily Black and Latino. One Boston area delivery company summarily “deactivated” approximately 30-40 employees on a single day at Amazon’s direction, nearly all of whom were drivers of color.

As we pointed out in an open letter to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s practices not only eliminate talented individuals from Amazon’s workforce, they also raise significant legal concerns. Due to over-policing and over-incarceration in communities of color, unnecessarily stringent background checks disproportionately affect Black and Latino individuals and therefore risk violating federal anti-discrimination law.

Our advocacy has already resulted in significant media attention and public scrutiny of Amazon’s practices – and we plan to pursue all available legal remedies if Amazon does not voluntarily change its practices.

## POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

In a landmark decision this year, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court acknowledged in *Commonwealth v. Warren*, that we have a racial profiling problem in Boston. Police misconduct generally is disproportionately experienced in communities of color, resulting in the violation of individuals' rights and the degradation of their dignity.

The Lawyers' Committee continues to be a champion for those impacted individuals. Racial profiling cases that we are currently pursuing include:

- In August 2016, we filed a discrimination complaint with the MassDOT's Office for Civil Rights on behalf of a 16-year-old who the MBTA discriminated against by improperly removing him from a train at South Station, racially profiling him as part of a group of alleged disorderly Black children; and
- In September 2016, we filed a complaint against the Walpole Police Department on behalf of a Black driver who was illegally stopped, removed from his vehicle, and searched by police.

In both of these cases, the Lawyers' Committee is demanding not only remedies for the individual clients, but comprehensive implicit bias training to avoid similar incidents of racial profiling in the future.

We also continue our long-standing push for diversity in law enforcement. A key component of the tension between communities of color and police departments is the lack of diversity in the police force. Cases in this area include:

- With *pro bono* support from **Birnbaum & Godkin**, the Lawyers' Committee sued the Boston Police Department ("BPD") to obtain information on the racial composition of the police force over the last decade.
- In *Jones v. City of Boston*, the city has been fighting for 13 years to defend a discriminatory and scientifically flawed drug screening test that has a disparate impact on Black officers. The test has caused the police to lose long-serving and highly-commended officers who were wrongly identified as people who use drugs. The Lawyers' Committee brought a federal suit on behalf of 10 police officers and the **Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement Officers** (MAMLEO). With *pro bono* support from **WilmerHale**, this matter is now pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.
- In *Defay v. Boston Police Department*, our *pro bono* partner **WilmerHale** and the Lawyers' Committee obtained a favorable ruling by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, holding that the police department discriminates against its minority recruits in its disciplinary practices.
- In February 2016, the Lawyers' Committee and **Fair Work, Inc.** filed a complaint in Superior Court against the Town of Brookline on behalf of two Black police officers forced to endure a racially hostile work environment. The complaint seeks damages for the two officers as well as injunctive relief ordering the town to take affirmative steps to remedy the hostile work environment.

The Lawyers Committee will continue to tackle all facets of police accountability.

## COMMUNITIES SERVED

Our small business clients are drawn from diverse communities across Massachusetts. Over the last year we have further expanded our reach to 12 new communities across Greater Boston. We have served entrepreneurs and businesses in the following communities through legal clinics, workshops, seminars and individual representations:

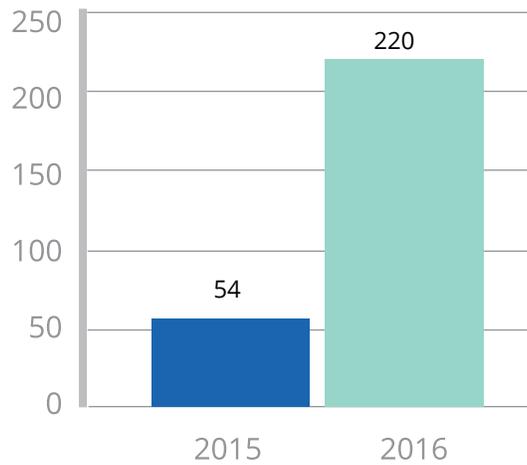
- Brighton
- \*Belmont
- Boston
- Brockton
- Brookline
- Cambridge
- Chinatown
- \*Charlestown
- \*Dartmouth
- \*Dedham
- Dorchester
- East Boston
- Framingham
- Hyde Park
- Jamaica Plain
- Lawrence
- Lynn
- Malden
- Mattapan
- \*Methuen
- \*Milton
- \*Natick
- \*North Adams
- Quincy
- Randolph
- \*Revere
- Roxbury
- \*Salem
- \*Somerville
- Waltham
- \*Watertown

\* *New communities served*

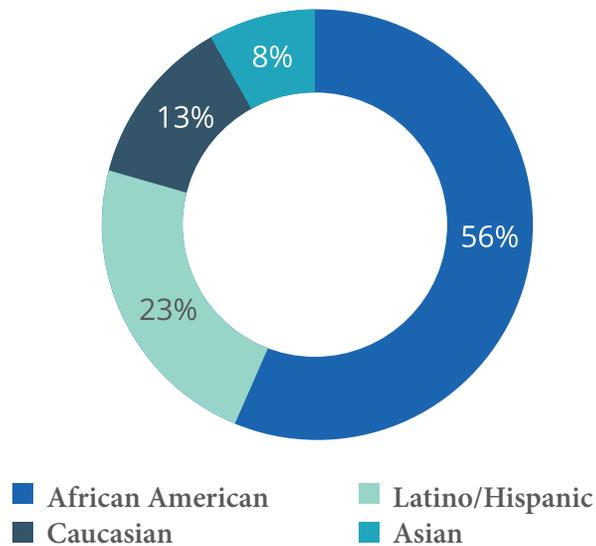
## ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROJECT

The Economic Justice Project (EJP) provides minority, immigrant, and low-income entrepreneurs and small business owners with free legal assistance, business support, and education. EJP furthers LCCR's vision of economic empowerment in disadvantaged communities by helping individuals develop sustainable businesses and achieve economic self-sufficiency. By connecting low-income entrepreneurs to law firms providing *pro bono* legal services, we work to close the opportunity gap. In 2016, we served over 200 entrepreneurs and small businesses. Over half of these businesses are women-owned, and more than 90% are minority-owned. These businesses are the economic engines fueling the growth of our Commonwealth.

### SMALL BUSINESSES SERVED



### DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN



*Over 200 Businesses Served*

## INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION

Through the generous *pro bono* work of our partner law firms, we match small business owners with attorneys who provide them with the free transactional legal assistance they need for their businesses to grow. Common small business concerns include, entity registration and formation, contract issues, intellectual property concerns, and employment issues.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

At the heart of any successful business is a well-informed owner, armed with business legal knowledge to effectively operate and sustain a small business. This past year, EJP has seen significant growth in expanding our educational programming. Partnering with **Latham & Watkins, Roxbury Community College, and Northeastern University School of Law**, we once again held our flagship seminar, **Create Your Own Job**. Designed to introduce fundamental business topics to aspiring entrepreneurs, this seminar offers classes on entity formation, business planning, public speaking, marketing and social media. The success of Create Your Own Job in Boston has led to the expansion of the series to other areas of the Commonwealth. In partnership with the **Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council, MetroWest Legal Services, and Latham & Watkins**, we have brought a similar series to Framingham entitled **Business Legal Fundamentals**.



Graduates from our Spring 2016 "Create Your Own Job" seminar with Economic Justice Project Director, Priya Lane

## PROGRAM OFFERS SMALL BUSINESSES LEGAL HELP

### BAY STATE BANNER

*"A promising sign for Boston's business community is the number of entrepreneurs who come to the Lawyers' Committee seeking help."*



Aaron Wilson, Owner of Lead the Baseline, teaches entrepreneurs about creating the perfect pitch

After working with graduates of the Create Your Own Job seminar, we recognized a need for a more advanced series to address the legal issues faced by existing small businesses. In the Spring of 2016, we launched the **Access to Business Law** seminar, a ten-week seminar program structured to tackle various types of legal issues small businesses face while operating and growing. Hosted in smart classrooms provided by the **East Boston Neighborhood Health Center's Training and Education Institute**, weekly workshops covering topics such as employment, taxes, and intellectual property are taught by attorneys from **Latham & Watkins, WilmerHale, Chu, Ring, & Hazel, and Ropes & Gray**.

In 2016, EJP also hosted ten subject-specific workshops developed with industry experts and community partners. Some notable examples include an intellectual property workshop series with **Foley Hoag**, an employment workshop with **Nixon Peabody** and **Commonwealth Kitchen**, and a series on how to finance your business with **Mass Growth Capital Corporation, ACCION, Eastern Bank, Boston Private, Nixon Peabody, and Boston Impact Initiative**.

EJP has continued this growth with another new series focused on Food Entrepreneurs entitled **Food Biz 101**. In partnership with **Commonwealth Kitchen** and **Goodwin**, Food Biz 101 is a 12-week seminar designed to help aspiring food entrepreneurs launch their businesses. In addition to general business law topics, this seminar covers food-specific topics such as food safety, labelling regulations, and dealing with distributors. The class culminates in a pitch competition where participants have the opportunity to share their business ideas with industry experts.

## CLIENT HIGHLIGHT: TERESA MAYNARD, SWEET TEEZ BAKERY

Teresa Maynard, a native Bostonian from Dorchester, participated in our inaugural Food Biz 101 series. Teresa wants to establish her small business in the Codman Square area as a way to help revitalize a community that has long been underserved and overlooked. The idea for her bakery started off with a simple goal: provide the community of Four Corners with a great place to come together, indulge their sweet tooth, and enjoy a great cup of coffee.

At the culminating pitch competition, Teresa and six of her Food Biz 101 classmates each gave a five minute pitch to a group of judges, describing their products, business structure, and future goals. Our food entrepreneurs did a phenomenal job and were able to convey both their passion and professional ambitions for their growing businesses. Teresa won the competition by impressing the judges with her passionate story of wishing to give back to her neighborhood.

Teresa's passion for baking and perseverance to succeed is contagious and inspiring. Sweet Teez Bakery truly encompasses the heart and soul of what the Lawyers' Committee's Economic Justice Project is all about.



Food Biz 101 participant Teresa Maynard, Sweet Teez Bakery

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

Over the past year, the Lawyers' Committee has responded to requests from minority employees seeking representation to address workplace discrimination. As we have done since its inception in 1968, our organization provides *pro bono* counsel for those who have been rejected for hire, passed over for promotion, or unjustly fired because of their race, religion, gender or national identity. Our goal is to bring justice onto the workplace by litigating claims on behalf of those who are most vulnerable. To that end, we have fought against racially hostile work environments, sexual harassment, disparate treatment, and workplace rules and practices that impose a disparate impact on employees of color.

We have been providing representation for the past three years to recent immigrants from Latin America by filing discrimination claims on their behalf. Our current clients were employed at establishments like a food market, an office cleaning enterprise, a cemetery, and an upscale restaurant. Their mistreatment resulted in lost hours, unfavorable work schedules, and eventually termination. Currently, our efforts have redoubled to protect Latina women who have been victims of sexual harassment. Working without immigration status, with very limited English, little or no formal education, these women have no shield to protect themselves from predators who seek sexual favors in exchange for more work hours and higher pay.

For example, we represent a Guatemalan woman who worked for the same cleaning company for eight years and was subjected to unwelcome sexual comments and sexual proposals from her direct supervisor. Complaints to senior management drew retaliatory discipline. The emotional scars that were left have taken years to heal, and the fear of further victimization has hindered her ability to fight this discrimination. Meanwhile, the sexual harasser is still with the company.

Over the past year we have brought numerous employment matters to successful resolution. Those clients had brought discrimination charges against a charter school, a nursing home, a fish factory, and a roofing company. In 2017, we will continue to tackle discrimination.

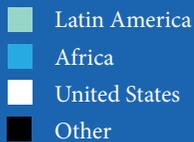
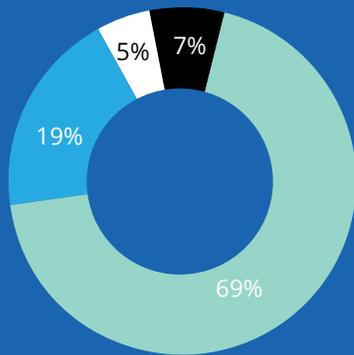
## TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW CLIENTS

221

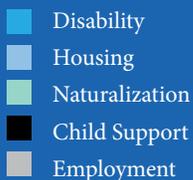
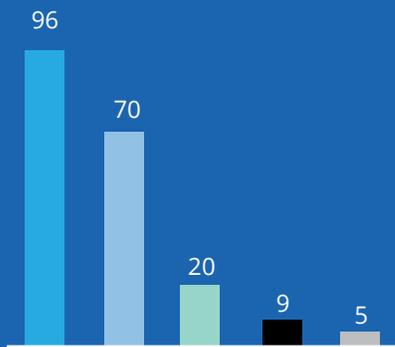
Gender

♀ 170 ♂ 51

## ORIGIN OF CLIENTS BY REGION



## ISSUES HANDLED



## MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Now in its 13th year, our Medical Legal Partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital at Chelsea provides much-needed legal services to address the complex interaction between race, immigration status, poverty, health care, and the law.

Clients are referred to the program by their treating physician or by a community health worker. The trust that envelops their doctor and their health worker extends to the Lawyers' Committee attorney, who becomes an integral member of the Community Health Improvement Team.

Most importantly—and most uniquely innovative for this kind of medical-legal partnership—is the presence at the appointment of a qualified medical interpreter from the client's own country, speaking one of 17 languages from Kunama to Nepali. Not only does this MGH-Chelsea staff interpreter share the refugee's culture but the interpreter has also facilitated the refugee's medical and psychiatric examinations and is deeply familiar with the client's health status. The client might be so traumatized by events in his country's civil war that he cannot bring himself to convey the details of torture or prison. But those events will be known to the interpreter and can be passed along to the attorney, who can then weave this information into a legal case supporting disability payments, or defending against an eviction. For this reason, we have a tremendous success rate:

- In 2016, we handled 410 appointments, involving 221 new clients.
- We secured disability benefits for 57 children and adults, bringing much-needed economic support to low-income households.
- Approximately one-third of our cases are related to housing. We negotiated successful resolutions in over 30 eviction cases.

In October, we conducted a workshop on immigration law at MGH-Chelsea. Featuring speakers from **WilmerHale** and the **PAIR Project**, the standing-room-only workshop was a resounding success. The presentation was especially intended for case workers who assist immigrants in Chelsea, a gateway community. Additional trainings are planned for next year.

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On April 27, 2016, the Lawyers' Committee launched a \$100,000 campaign to establish the **Edward J. Barshak Fund for Justice** to provide dedicated resources for our anti-discrimination work. We plan to replenish the fund when we win cases with attorney fee awards. In this manner, the fund will continue to support our work for decades to come.

As of November 1, we have raised \$66,000. We are proud to acknowledge our supporters.

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We are deeply grateful to all of our supporters. We specifically acknowledge the generous support of Mary Lu Bilek, Joseph Borsellino, Natasha Boye, Alan Dershowitz, Rory FitzPatrick, Ann Lambert, John Lozada, Maureen Mauri, Frank Michelman, Stuart Rossman, Robert Smith, Joseph Steinfield, Colin Van Dyke, and Toni Wolfman.

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Iván Espinoza-Madrugal, *Executive Director*

Iván joined the Lawyers' Committee in April 2015. Previously, he was the Legal Director of the Center for HIV Law and Policy; a staff attorney at Lambda Legal and MALDEF; an associate at Fried Frank; and a judicial law clerk in the U.S. District Court, S.D.N.Y., and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Iván is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and NYU School of Law. The National LGBT Bar Association has recognized him as one of the Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40. In 2016, he received the OUTLaw Alumnus of the Year Award from NYU School of Law.



Oren M. Sellstrom, *Director of Litigation*

Oren joined the Lawyers' Committee in September 2015 and oversees the organization's legal work. Previously, he served as Legal Director for the Lawyers' Committee affiliate in San Francisco, California. He has also worked as a legal services attorney, and he served as a judicial law clerk in the U.S. District Court, N.D.Cal. He is a 1992 graduate of Harvard Law School.



Matthew Cregor, *Education Project Director*

Matt joined the Lawyers' Committee in January 2014 and works on a variety of education matters including school discipline, special education, and student assignment. Previously, Matt served as a staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Matt is a 2006 graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center.



Priya Lane, *Director of the Economic Justice Project*

Priya Lane was appointed the Director of the Economic Justice Project in 2016 after serving the organization as a staff attorney, fellow, and intern. Priya leads LCCR's work to provide minority, immigrant, and low-income entrepreneurs and small business owners free business and legal assistance. Through her work she conducts workshops and legal clinics, provides one-on-one legal consultations, and matches business owners with *pro bono* attorneys for individual representation. Priya is a 2013 graduate of Northeastern University School of Law.



Laura Maslow-Armand, *Staff Attorney*

Laura joined the Lawyers' Committee in 2003. Prior to that, she served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights and Public Charities Divisions. Laura is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She divides her time between employment discrimination litigation and the Lawyers' Committee's Medical-Legal Partnership with MGH.



Sophia Hall, *Staff Attorney*

Sophia L. Hall joined the Lawyers' Committee in 2016. She works in a variety of legal areas, including voting rights, police accountability, education, and housing. Previously, Sophia served as a Staff Attorney with the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, providing pro bono legal representation to residents of the Commonwealth living with HIV/AIDS. Sophia is a 2012 graduate of Boston College Law School.



Alexa Marin, *Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by Latham & Watkins LLP*

Alexa joined the Lawyers' Committee in Fall 2015 after graduating from Northeastern University School of Law, where she participated in the Community Business Clinic. As part of the Belin Economic Justice Project, Alexa is spearheading a project providing transactional legal assistance to low-income and minority entrepreneurs and small business owners in East Boston, Massachusetts.

## SPECIAL THANKS

The Lawyers' Committee would like to offer profound thanks and gratitude to Sarah Ward.

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*“The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated.”*

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1963

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