Sometimes LAW is the only thing that makes a difference.

End poverty. Advocate for justice.
“We live in an age in which the fundamental principles to which we subscribe—liberty, equality, and justice for all—are encountering extraordinary challenges, . . . But it is also an age in which we can join hands with others who hold to those principles and face similar challenges.”

-Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Low income people in GHLA’s service area continue to face daunting challenges to meeting their basic needs for survival, but law can make a difference. The cumulative impact of our extensive individual representation, targeted systemic advocacy, and deep immersion with community partners is poverty alleviation—both person-by-person and by addressing structural barriers to safety, opportunity and greater well-being. We know that if poor people have access to an attorney the harsh effects of poverty—including homelessness, coping with violence, inadequate educational opportunities, unfairness on the job, hunger, poor health, and going without basic necessities—can be reduced.

We rely on the support of those—like you—who also believe that sometimes law is the only thing that makes a difference. We gratefully acknowledge all of our institutional funders, private foundations, other funders, government and community leaders, and the private bar which assists through pro bono representation and donations. Through last year’s Greater Hartford Legal Aid Foundation campaign and annual fundraising event, lawyers, law firms, corporations, and individuals also contributed over $450,000. We are deeply thankful to everyone who supports GHLA’s work in any way.

We also thank Matthew Wax-Krell for his exemplary four years as GHLA’s President from 2015 - 2018. Our stellar Board leadership supports both our financial stability and our rigorous advocacy.

This report highlights some of the ways GHLA improved the lives of our clients and community. Please visit our website at www.ghla.org to read more. We also look forward to seeing you at our next Celebrating Leaders for Justice event on July 18, 2019.

Sincerely,

Jamey Bell
Executive Director

Edward J. Heath
Board President
Terry was failing in school. She could not concentrate and was overcome with anxiety. Her school learned that her father was abusing her physically and emotionally, but the school social worker told her to “just get over it.” Terry’s GHLA education attorney demanded comprehensive evaluations, which revealed a learning disability and seizures triggered by the stress of abuse. The district agreed to send Terry to a therapeutic school, provide compensatory education, and train school staff in dealing with students affected by trauma. In a trauma-sensitive educational placement, and protected from her father by court order, Terry is finally able to focus on learning.
GHLA made a difference for students with disabilities who received no education programming at all for months at a time. These students will receive 1100 hours of compensatory services to make up for lost time and missed educational opportunity.
ENHANCING THE SAFETY AND ECONOMIC STABILITY OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

“GHLA has given me hope to live and courage to go on with my life.”
-GHLA Client

Paula’s husband battered her and terrorized her with his guns. Paula’s GHLA attorney first obtained a restraining order barring her husband from the house and confiscating the guns. Then GHLA got Paula a divorce and substantial alimony. Paula is now safer and more economically secure, thanks to her GHLA attorney.
In 2018, GHLA’s family-related advocacy secured more than $1,723,000 for our clients, all of whom are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.
GHLA’s high quality, high volume eviction defense practice prioritizes representation of clients who are elderly, or who have a government subsidy. The critical importance of eviction defense was recently confirmed by the work of 2017 Pulitzer Prize winner Matthew Desmond, who demonstrated that evictions are not only a symptom of poverty, but often are a cause of poverty, because they are so disruptive to employment, schooling, and health care. But law can make a difference: GHLA attorneys are on the front lines in the battle to keep families in their homes.

In 2018 GHLA’s advocates also achieved over $511,000 in other housing-related financial outcomes for clients.
Through final settlement of the Serrano v. Gaitor class action, low-income Hartford tenants whose apartments are condemned have access to an improved relocation assistance program. It provides displaced tenants with notice from the City of their right to apply for relocation assistance under the Connecticut Uniform Relocation Assistance Act, which may include help finding replacement housing, reasonable moving expenses, temporary housing, and some rental assistance to secure a comparable new apartment.

For Serrano class members, 505 monetary claims were approved, for a total disbursement of about $1,600,000 in payments.
GHLA made a difference for low-income workers—ensuring fair employment hiring practices at a national retail chain.

GHLA played a key role in advancing the employment rights of past and future applicants with criminal records for jobs at the Target Corporation. A national class action that began with GHLA filing a race discrimination claim for our client has been settled. It provides for monetary payments, priority for hiring, and new job-screening criteria.
A GHLA employment attorney represented a pregnant Certified Nurse Aide whose employer would not allow her to work after her doctor ordered some lifting restrictions related to her pregnancy. The attorney demanded that the employer offer our client light duty as a reasonable accommodation required by law. Our client returned to work and the employer paid her back wages for the weeks it refused to accommodate her.

GHLA is committed to helping clients with criminal records get a second chance at becoming productive adults. We won a full pardon for a woman widely respected in her community who had a conviction from 1997 for not immediately notifying the state to stop her benefits when she began a new job. With her record cleared, she can get the professional license that will allow her to earn a decent living.
An elderly man lived in a nursing home because his wife’s substance abuse had caused him to lose his apartment. GHLA attorneys worked together to get him divorced, change his court-appointed conservator to a concerned family member, and leave the nursing home to move to a new apartment with appropriate supports.
An 82 year old woman came to GHLA after the Department of Labor asked her to repay more than $3,000 in unemployment benefits. The woman was distraught: she had already lost the income from her job of over 35 years and the health insurance that came with the job, and was struggling to pay her rent. GHLA represented her at a hearing and won a waiver of the overpayment. We also helped our client apply for public programs that would help her with housing and health care expenses.
A senior with custody of his grandchildren was denied medical coverage for needed oxygen and dental work. Through persistent advocacy to the top of the chain of command at the state Department of Social Services, our client was granted HUSKY A, which covers his necessary treatment. In addition, DSS issued a staff memo clarifying that similar guardians are eligible for HUSKY.

In 2018, GHLA’s advocacy achieved about $782,000 in retroactive SSI awards, and about $244,000 in annualized monthly SSI benefits, for very low income disabled clients.
The major improvement in application processing means that tens of thousands of very low-income adults and children get the food they need every month.

Monthly data in our successful Briggs v. Bremby federal class litigation challenging delays in processing food stamps (SNAP) applications show that GHLA’s advocacy reduced delays from affecting 46% of applicants in February 2012 to affecting only 4% of applicants in December 2018.
In March 2018, GHLA teamed up with Make the Road Connecticut to assist families who relocated to Connecticut after Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico. We helped families with information and advocacy concerning FEMA assistance and provided other civil legal services on issues including public benefits and utilities.
A disabled woman came to GHLA after receiving harassing anonymous notes at the residential community for the elderly and disabled she lived in, because she is a lesbian. We negotiated the creation and implementation of a nondiscrimination policy at her residential facility, covering all categories protected under state and federal law, including sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

At the statewide True Colors Conference GHLA trained participants on using federal law to address LGBTQ-related bullying. Data show that LGBTQ students are disproportionately bullied at school.
RESPONDING TO EMERGENT COMMUNITY NEEDS (continued...)

Launching the Legal Initiative for Immigrant Victims (LIIV)

GHLA launched the Legal Initiative for Immigrant Victims (LIIV) to enhance our services to immigrants who are victims of violence. A Singer Fellow joined our team providing information, representation and related holistic civil legal services to immigrant survivors of violence. We are proud to partner in this work with community and advocacy partners to help immigrants seek safer status.

Dadrie is a 28 year old woman from Trinidad whose U.S. citizen husband abused her physically and psychologically. GHLA filed applications for Dadrie for permanent residence and work authorization under self-petition laws for battered immigrants. GHLA also obtained free counseling for Dadrie to address the violence she had experienced. Dadrie was able to get a job after she received her work authorization. She now has her own residence and is beginning to establish a stable life for herself and her two U.S. citizen children.
GHLA immigration attorneys continued to advocate for abused, abandoned, and neglected immigrant youth ages 18-21 following our 2017 victory in the State Supreme Court in In re Henrry P.B-P.

We played a lead role in a statewide coalition that convinced the legislature to codify the role of state courts in the hybrid state-federal system for immigrant youths to obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Henrry himself may be one of the first Connecticut youths to benefit from these accomplishments. GHLA filed a SIJS petition for Henrry so that he can remain in the U.S. and not have to return to Honduras, which he fled after receiving death threats from people who killed his father and grandfather.
In Manchester, we engaged educational, social service and law enforcement leaders in a new initiative to improve educational equity and outcomes for students with disabilities and students of color.
We also grew community knowledge of legal rights and remedies by posting “Community Justice Fellows” at library branches and a medical clinic in Hartford.

Look for GHLA at partner sites in these communities:

- East Hartford Public Library
- Human Resources Agency in Bristol
- Neighborhood Services in Enfield
- Center Congregational Church in Manchester
- Community Health Services in Hartford
Our Funders

Greater Hartford Legal Aid gratefully acknowledges financial support received from the following funders:

- Asylum Hill Congregational Church
- Connecticut Bar Foundation (IOLTA)
- Connecticut Bar Foundation (Singer Connecticut Public Service Fellowship)
- Connecticut Health Foundation
- Greater Hartford Legal Aid Foundation, Inc.
- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
- North Central Area Agency on Aging
- State of Connecticut, Court Fees Grant-in-Aid
- State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services
- State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch Grant-in-Aid
- State of Connecticut, Office of Victim Services
- Town of West Hartford
- United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

GHLA is honored to have the generous support of individuals, law firms, corporations and other donors. These donors are listed in the GHLA Foundation Campaign Report.

“My attorney was able to ground me when I felt I was going over the edge. I cannot say enough about my attorney and how professional and personable she is. She was the answer to my prayers when I was feeling lost.”

-GHLA Client
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“When I first inquired about services I had no hope. Thank you GHLA from the bottom of my heart.”

-GHLA Client
Our Pro Bono Partners

These attorneys and firms contributed invaluable skills and experience pro bono to GHLA’s clients in 2018:

Susan Pearlman
Francis Brady

Czepiga Daly Pope & Perri
Sharon Pope

Law Office Of Elizabeth L. McMahon
Elizabeth McMahon

LaFountain Immigration Law
Meghann LaFountain

Day Pitney
   Erick Sandler, Bryan Orticelli, Alyssa Helal

Hinckley Allen
   Lisa Zaccardelli, Tom Farrell

McCarter & English
   Charlie Ray, Tom Rechen, Britt Killian,
   Michelle Movahed

Shipman & Goodwin
   Morgan Rueckert, Vaughan Finn, Susan Murphy,
   Keegan Drenosky, Alyce Alfano, Natalia Sieira Millan

Updike, Kelly & Spellacy
   Richard Order, Adam Marks, Chelsea Castiglioni,
   Christopher Klepps, Melanie Schoffelmeer,
   Gideon Asemnor, Brendan Mahoney

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   Nicole Mule, Je’Quana Orr, Jonathan Schaefer,
   Evan Seeman, Susan Masters, Nuala Droney (no longer
   with the firm), Charles Modzelewski, Kate Dion

Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association
   Joan Maloney

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   Lincoln Woodard

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   Marci Stovall, Anne Dranginis, Campbell Barrett

Riscassi & Davis
   John Houlihan, Paul Iannacone

Bayer Odlum Hyde
   John R. Hyde, Teri Bayer

Louden Katz & McGrath
   Robert B. Katz
In 2018 we handled:

4060 Legal Matters

2353 Newly-opened Cases

And reached:

2700 people through Community Legal Education

1000s more through Systemic Litigation & Advocacy
Our Mission

To achieve equal justice for poor people, to work with clients to promote social justice, and to address the effects and root causes of poverty.

For those living in poverty we advocate to:

• Help tenants avoid homelessness.
• Enhance the safety of family and sexual violence victims.
• Increase opportunities for an adequate public school education.
• Maintain workers’ employment & related income, and increase opportunities.
• Seek federal immigration protection for immigrant victims of violence.
• Preserve government benefits and access to health care.
• Protect the health, safety and self-determination of seniors.

Note: In this report, clients’ names and other information have been changed to protect their privacy. The pictures in this report do not depict actual clients or staff.
End poverty. Advocate for justice.

CONTACT US: (860) 541-5000 or ghla.org