FORGING A FAIR AND JUST PATH FORWARD
FY2021 YEAR IN REVIEW
Dear friends,

As another year comes to a close and we reflect on the work we’ve accomplished over the last fiscal year – July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021 – we find ourselves, yet again, in unchartered territory. You have been with us every step of the way since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Together we witness the many stops and starts and it seems things are getting better: more people are fully vaccinated, and businesses and schools have reopened. It seems as if something resembling a “return to normal” might be within reach.

But all the while, as you know, systemic barriers continue to keep those we serve in poverty. The burdens placed on low-income Virginians early last year have not gone away – if anything, many of these same families are even further underwater. People continue the struggle of staying safely housed, putting food on the table, and keeping their families healthy. But now, they face rising housing prices, higher grocery bills, and an overextended healthcare system.

You were a vital part of the VPLC staff’s ability to respond quickly to the needs of low-income Virginians in a rapidly shifting landscape. As you’ll see in the pages that follow, your financial investment made an impact as VPLC’s dedicated team of attorneys and advocates eased the burden for these families, making it easier to stay safe, housed, healthy, and fed.

This work would not be possible without you. The accomplishments reflected in this report are the direct result of your support, and we are grateful for your commitment to our mission. While there’s still much ground to cover, we’re further down the road than we were this time last year. Thank you for embarking on this journey with us. We’re proud to continue forging a fair and just path forward and breaking down the systemic barriers that keep low-income Virginians in poverty – together.

Sincerely,

Jay Speer
IMPACT

1,500 received advice on how to fight their evictions through the Eviction Legal Helpline.

TENANTS

VPLC worked hard to keep Virginians safely housed during the pandemic, preventing evictions for tenants and protecting mobile home park residents.

GREATER VIRGINIA

VPLC successfully advocated for legislation during the General Assembly sessions that will remove systemic barriers keeping low-income Virginians in the cycle of poverty:

- Until June 30, 2022, landlords must apply for rental assistance instead of evicting tenants who can’t pay their rent.
- Penalties for unlawful eviction have increased.
- Families have more time to pay their rent.
- A new program has been created to help families with their utility bills.
- Homeowners now receive better notice before facing foreclosure.
- Families can no longer be sued over school meal debt.
- Child-placing agencies must now involve a child’s relatives when developing a child’s foster care plan.

KEEPING VIRGINIANS HOUSED

Left: VPLC’s Christie Marra speaks at a Know Your Rights training. Right: Tenants line up for assistance at a VPLC rent relief clinic.
KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER | EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

During the 2021 fiscal year, VPLC's Center for Family Advocacy helped build a coalition to create two pilot parent legal representation centers in rural Southwest Virginia and in urban Northern Virginia that will protect parents' legal rights.

The Center for Family Advocacy relaunched VPLC's online Do-it-Yourself Divorce tool. 8,000 people have used the service, saving them hundreds of dollars in fees and making it the most used tool on Lawhelp Interactive, a website that helps people fill out legal documents for free. It can be accessed at valegalaid.org.

HELP FOR VICTIM-IMMIGRANTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

VPLC's Legal Assistance to Victim-Immigrants of Domestic Abuse (LA VIDA) program helps undocumented immigrant victims of domestic and sexual violence file visa applications to obtain legal status in the U.S.

206 CLIENTS

Applying for legal status in the U.S. often takes years. LA VIDA helps clients navigate this complicated, multi-step process every step of the way.
SNAP EXPANSION

VPLC successfully led the effort to expand SNAP to more than 25,000 additional families in Virginia, the most significant expansion of public benefits in the Commonwealth since the expansion of Medicaid in 2019.

SIMPLIFYING FOOD HELP

VPLC launched the SNAP eligibility calculator, vasnap.org, in September 2020, a state-of-the-art tool that makes it easy to determine if a person is eligible to receive food assistance. Thanks to the work VPLC put into developing this tool, several other state organizations are also adopting it for their state.

HEALTHCARE

ENDING THE 10-YEAR WORK REQUIREMENT FOR MEDICAID

VPLC led the effort to end the “40-quarter” rule in Virginia’s Medicaid program that required thousands of legal immigrants in Virginia to work at least 10 years before qualifying for Medicaid.

39,786 PEOPLE attended education events held by VPLC’s Enroll Virginia! program. In partnership with at least 250 other organizations, VPLC’s Enroll Virginia! navigators held over 200 outreach events. They also educated as many as possible by advertising in several languages on print, social media, and local radio stations.

VPLC’s Center for Healthy Communities advocated for affordability in the ACA Marketplace during the 2021 General Assembly session. Thanks to their efforts, Virginia now has a reinsurance program that will reduce Marketplace premiums.

VPLC’s Sara Cariano with Governor Northam and Freddy Mejia of the Commonwealth Institute at the signing of the reinsurance bill.
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and hundreds of thousands of Virginians lost their jobs, unemployment claims skyrocketed, and Virginians waited months for help due to outdated infrastructure and lack of capacity. In response, VPLC partnered with the Legal Aid Justice Center, Legal Aid Works, Consumer Litigation Associates, PC, and Kelly Guzzo, PLC to file a class action lawsuit against the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), demanding the agency quickly end the backlog.

So far, the lawsuit has resulted in $199.8 million in benefits for 46,310 Virginians.

VPLC partnered with legal aid programs, legislators, community organizers, and tenant rights organizations to provide civil legal information to those who needed it. We hosted virtual events and webinars, created extensive outreach materials, and more.
HONORING JILL HANKEN, VPLC HEALTH ATTORNEY

In the summer of 2021, Jill Hanken, VPLC’s longtime Health Attorney and Director of the Center for Healthy Communities, announced her retirement. For over 40 years, Jill worked at VPLC and paved the way for better healthcare in the Commonwealth. A relentless advocate for low-income Virginians, she successfully fought for advances that have given hundreds of thousands access to healthcare. To honor her work, VPLC and Jill’s friends and colleagues established the Jill A. Hanken Scholarship Fund dedicated to training health advocates in Virginia’s legal aid community.

“I was one of the hundreds of legal aid lawyers blessed to have Jill as a mentor and role model early in my career. She taught me health law, how to be a vigorous advocate, how to balance family and work, and so much more. Virginia’s families have benefitted tremendously from her work, and our Commonwealth is a better place for all because of her.” — Anne Holton, former First Lady of Virginia, former Virginia Secretary of Education

ANNUAL STATEWIDE LEGAL AID CONFERENCE

In October 2020 VPLC celebrated the 40th anniversary of the conference. This was the first-ever virtual conference and boasted the largest attendance to date.
FINANCIALS

**REVENUE**
- 48% Grants
- 33% Government
- 13% Donations
- 6% Other

**EXPENSES**
- 72% Program
- 8% Administration
- 2% Fundraising
- 18% Subgrants

TOTAL
- $4,415,927

TOTAL
- $3,658,414

FY21 financials are unaudited. Audited financials will be available at vplc.org in spring 2022.

STAFF LEADERSHIP AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The staff, Board of Directors, and Advisory Council held positions during the 2021 fiscal year from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

**STAFF LEADERSHIP**
- James "Jay" Speer, Esq.
  **Executive Director & Director of the Center for Economic Justice**
- Jill Hanken, Esq.
  **Director of the Center for Healthy Communities**
- Susheela Varky, Esq.
  **Director of the Center for Family Advocacy**
- Dana Wiggins
  **Director of the Center for Outreach**
- Lindsey Noble
  **Office and Finance Manager**
- Toni Maxey
  **Director of Development**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
- Kathleen L. Wright, Esq.
  **President**
- Helen O’Beirne Hardiman, Esq.
  **Vice President**
- Debra Grant
  **Secretary/Treasurer**
- Gobind Sethi, Esq.
  **Past President**
- Abrar Azamuddin, Esq.
- Tori Andrea Babington, Esq.
- Rusty Boleman, Esq.
- Stephen Evanko
- Briana Green
- Wanda Harry
- Pastor Rodney Hunter
- Margaret E. Ivey, Esq.
- Kristi Kelly, Esq.
- Emily Connor Kennedy, Esq.

**Ann Kloeckner, Esq.**
- LaFonda Page
- Nicholas “Nick” Rathod
- Kecia Reed
- Drew Sarrett, Esq.
- Mona H. Siddiqui, Esq.
- Valerie Slater, Esq.
- Bryan Slaughter, Esq.
- Joanna Suyes, Esq.
- Stephen Teague, Esq.
- Daniel Watkins, Esq.
- Vicky Zakaria

**ADVISORY COUNCIL**
- Leonard Bennett, Esq.
- Jeffrey Breit, Esq.
- Karl Bren
- Jack Harris, Esq.
- Helivi Holland, Esq.
- Don King, Esq.
- Jacquelyn Stone, Esq.

VPLC HELPLINES

ENROLL VIRGINIA! HEALTH INSURANCE HELPLINE: 888-392-5132
EVICITION LEGAL HELPLINE: 833-NOEVICT (833-663-8428)
PREDATORY LOAN HELPLINE: 866-830-4501
UTILITY HELPLINE: 804-313-9363
SNAP HELPLINE: 866-753-7627

919 EAST MAIN STREET • SUITE 610 • RICHMOND, VA 23219 • 804-782-9430