

# BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY



## LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAI'I

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FY21 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021

## OUR VISION

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"Building a Just Society"



## OUR MISSION

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The mission of the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i is to address critical legal needs through high quality legal advocacy, outreach, and education in pursuit of fairness and justice.



*O ka pono ke hana 'ia a iho  
main a lani*

**Continue to do good until the  
heavens come down to you  
Blessings come to those who  
persist in doing good**

# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we closed our fiscal year on June 30, 2021, we marked fifteen months since the start of the pandemic. Fifteen months of most staff working from home, yet still finding ways to be there for our clients through home visits, appearances in court, in-person meetings when needed, and at outreach sites in partnership with homeless shelters, community health centers and in the community. Our staff's dedication, heart and commitment to serving others has been so crucial to our success.

During this fiscal year, we also found new ways to improve access to our services. In the fall of 2020, on-line intake was launched allowing an applicant to apply for services on-line at any time and, if eligible, sign up for a time to talk further with an advocate about their situation. Over 2,000 applications were received through this portal in addition to over 15,000 applications for services through our intake hotline and at community locations. The demand for services was great and through pandemic federal funding, new support from foundations and our donors, we continued to serve, despite the downturn and shutdown in the economy.

These times also provided opportunities for new partnerships and even closer collaborations with existing partners. On 'Oahu, we launched a project with the First

Circuit District Courts to provide legal information to tenants at eviction return hearings. Across the state, we also worked closely with partners from the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness, the Department of Human Services, the Mediation Center of the Pacific, Partners in Care, Catholic Charities, the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, Hawaiian Community Assets, and local county governments, among others, to prepare for the end of the eviction moratorium and to provide critical legal information to the community. We also launched a new medical legal partnership with Hawai'i Health Harm and Reduction Center, providing on-site legal screenings and assistance for their patients.

As always, we are so grateful for the support of the community for over 70 years so that we can continue to strive to "Build a Just Society."

Malama Pono,

**M. NALANI FUJIMORI KAINA**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT

**BLAINE ROGERS**  
**DAVIS LEVIN LIVINGSTON**

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With 76% of Hawaii's population fully vaccinated, there is at least some degree of normalcy returning to most people's daily lives nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people have returned to the office and streets, shops, and restaurants, while not at pre-pandemic levels, have begun to bustle. Tourism numbers have crept back upwards notwithstanding ongoing travel restrictions.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i is the only statewide provider of civil legal services to the low-income with ten offices across the state, including at least one on each of the major Hawaiian Islands. Since March 2020, Legal Aid has seen a cataclysmic increase in requests for legal services to assist with, among other things, unemployment claims and potential evictions. In FY21, Legal Aid opened over 2,400 housing-related cases, a significant increase over prior years and nearly 1/6th of its FY21 caseload was COVID-related. Legal Aid absorbed this heightened community demand while itself dealing with remote work and flexible schedule realities.

But, like the tsunami waves that follow the initial earthquake, the full economic and social impacts of the pandemic have yet to be seen. COVID-19 disproportionately impacted minorities, the poor, and other vulnerable populations Legal Aid serves. While emergency funds and other government action helped to ameliorate at least some of the immediate impacts, it is anticipated that the demand for Legal Aid's services will only grow in FY22. Federal rental assistance programs and moratoriums will expire and there will surely be a spike in debt collection cases, foreclosures, and bankruptcies, in addition to likely increases in family law and domestic violence issues.

In short, the need for legal services is greater now than it has ever been. And Legal Aid cannot fulfill its mission to provide those services without the direct, unwavering, and generous support of all of you.

Thank you for your support.



## HELPING TO MAKE STRIDES FOR JASON

The Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i helped make strides for my son, Jason, to be included in his first field trip with his non-disabled peers.

After years of long battles with the Department of Education, in 2020, Jason was allowed to participate in an overnight statewide student conference, complete with behavior support and accommodations because of his disability. He was the school's first student representative who had disabilities and a special education IEP.

Jason learned to advocate at the Legislature alongside all students.

Before I came to Legal Aid, the school asked me to arrange for and pay extra for separate accommodations, to be present for the 2-night stay, and to transport my son to and from the Capitol, which were not required of other parents. The school would provide a behavior support technician, but only during regular school hours. Jason would not be able to participate fully.

I believed this was unfair and I could not pay more than the regular conference fee. To make inclusion possible this time, I needed an advocate.

The Legal Aid's Whole Child Project came through!

Their staff attorney taught me how Sec. 504 is a law that guarantees a student equal access to extracurricular activities. I learned to write an effective letter explaining how imposing the requirements due to my son's disability would deny my son equal access to participate.

A separate special education was not enough for my son. He wanted to be included, too.

I encourage parents of students with disabilities to ask the school and district staff for -- and expect -- their children to be included in field trips and extracurricular activities with the supports they may need. When your student is denied, this legal battle for inclusion can be won.

I would like parents and others to know the breakthrough that Legal Aid Society made for all students to have equal access and to be included.

- Linda Elento, mother of Jason Elento



MARGRIT

## FEARFUL TO FREE

Margrit knows what it's like to feel really helpless. After her husband passed away in 2017, she started receiving credit card bills. Her husband had opened multiple accounts in her name without her knowledge. There was also a huge hospital lien that resulted in a DMV registration lien. She ended up living in a homeless shelter for two years and then at a friend's house.

"People were coming after me for these bills. I felt so down," she said. "When you are down at your feet, you have to kiss the ground. I just wanted to have peace."

Hope came for Margrit when she met with Legal Aid Kona office through a friend's advice in August 2020. The staff worked hard to wipe out all her debt and get the lien at the DMV removed so she can renew her vehicle registration. Within four months, she was a "free" woman - free from debt and worries.

"I am eternally grateful to Legal Aid for the peace they brought into my life," said Margrit. "We all could use a little bit of help and love. Life can be so tough, and it can end so quickly. I treasure what I have today because I know we only live once."

Margrit is feeling peaceful with her life now and living in a government subsidized community apartment complex in Kona.

## CONFUSED TO CONFIDENT

When his ex-partner served a petition for sole custody over their two sons in August 2020, Kaiipo was discouraged and devastated. He did not know what to do. On top of that, he was facing health issues that needed immediate medical attention.

Legal Aid came to the rescue in the nick of time. The day before Kaiipo was admitted to a hospital, one of our staff attorneys was able to meet with him and thoroughly explain the process of getting joint custody. And while Kaiipo was in the hospital for ten days, our lawyer worked hard to make sure papers are submitted and the deadline is met.

"My Legal Aid attorney went above and beyond by coming to see me in the hospital to go over my written answer and to get my signature for my court forms," said Kaiipo. "If it wasn't for her, I would not have been able to do that on my own. She was very caring and heartwarming. She made me feel that she was there for me and supported me."

In October 2020, the judge issued an order reflecting a joint custody and visitation schedule for Kaiipo and the mother of his children. He was happy with the outcome and felt validated as a good and responsible father.



KAIPO with sons

## HOMELESS TO HOPEFUL

In the midst of the pandemic, Thomas Young lost his Section 8 rental assistance, became homeless and lived out of his vehicle. Sometimes he got lucky and stayed at friends' houses, but not always. His living condition eventually took a toll on his body and negatively impacted his health. He was hospitalized several times.

"I went to Legal Aid for assistance mainly because I felt I was being treated unfairly," he said.

In August 2020, our staff helped Thomas get his Section 8 voucher re-instated, giving him the means to find a home. And what a place he found: a newly renovated apartment in a strategic location with a supportive management and friendly neighbors!

"We are not always being treated equal," Thomas said. "We need to recognize when we are no longer capable of handling matters by ourselves. And only professionals such as Legal Aid will be able to assist us with our dispute."

# HIGHLIGHTS

The Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i is committed to serving the vulnerable in our community through education and outreach, free counsel and advice, brief services/limited action, legal representation, and negotiating settlements.

1,887  
CASES

Stabilizing Families

MORE THAN  
20,000  
LIVES IMPACTED

1,215  
CASES

Preserving the Home

1,091  
CASES

Protecting Seniors

6,500  
TO 9,800

Individuals Reached  
in 1,350 Outreaches

\$3.9  
MILLION

Financial Benefits  
for Clients



I can't thank Legal Aid staff enough for all their hard work. I am shocked how quickly they made my divorce happen especially in the middle of a pandemic. They were absolutely amazing. They were helpful, knowledgeable, quick, and always kept me informed. I finally feel free to be happy and to look toward a bright future. – *Mary\**



# WHO WE SERVE

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In 2020 and 2021, the issues of race equity became critical touchpoints for national discussion. While programs across the country have just started to look at this issue, Legal Aid has been consciously focused on this work for decades with a priority on defending the interests of Native Hawaiians. In addition, in 2011, Legal Aid added as a priority area “assisting culturally and linguistically isolated populations” which broadened Legal Aid’s services to populations that had traditionally been underserved and historically discriminated against.

**23.71%**

Native Hawaiians

**18.21%**

Victims of  
domestic  
violence/crime

**13.18%**

Culturally and  
Linguistically  
Isolated  
Populations

**17.06%**

Living with family  
or friends

**21.04%**

Populations with  
Special  
Vulnerabilities

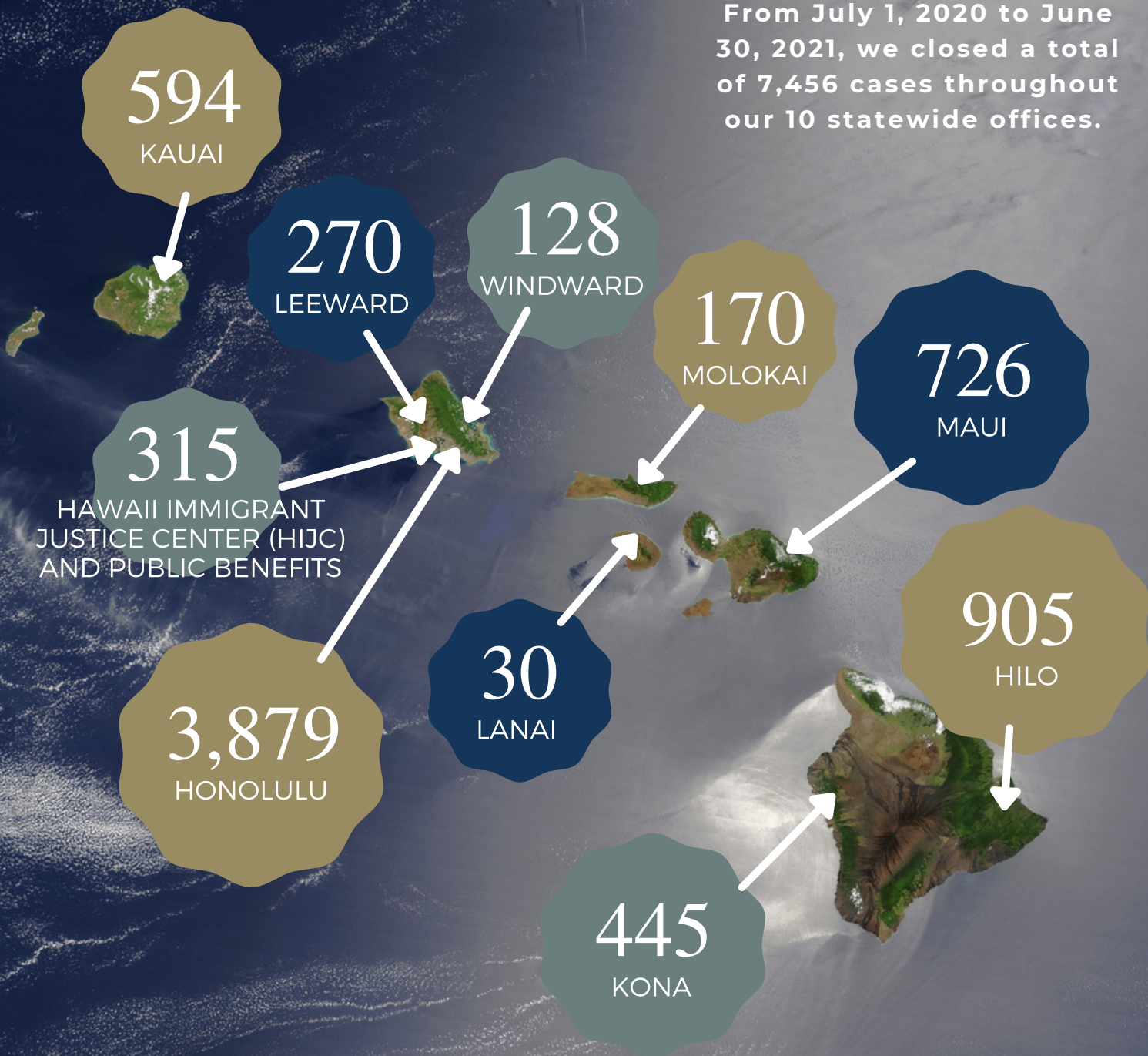
**12.8%**

Homeless, living in  
a homeless shelter,  
or in transitional  
housing



# WHERE WE SERVE

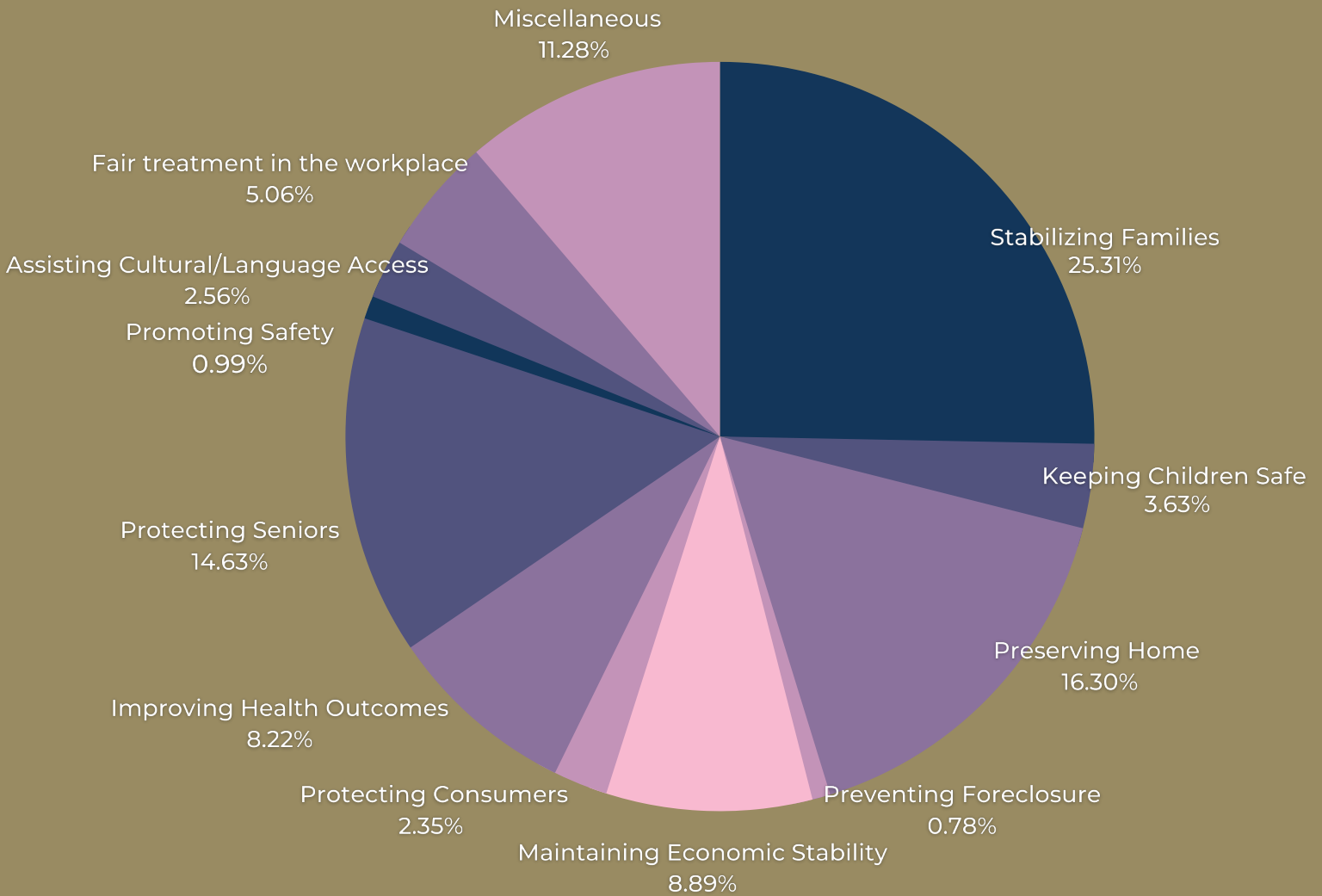
From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, we closed a total of 7,456 cases throughout our 10 statewide offices.



Legal Aid continues to work with social service providers in the community and provide outreach to over 40 different sites in order to provide supportive legal services to homeless individuals and families. Services have included document replacement, benefit assistance, family law matters, and education for people who are homeless or living in transitional shelters about tenant rights and responsibilities.

# TYPES OF CASES

Stabilizing families has continued to be the highest priority need area through the years (over 30% in FY19 and over 27% in FY20). However, due to the eviction crisis, preserving the home cases and needs significantly increased from 12.61% in FY20 to 16.3% in FY21. Protecting seniors also continued to be a high need area of service.



“ Legal Aid opens a new world; you really feel that there is someone who is able to help you. What a relief. You will feel respected and no one 'points a finger' towards you for all your debts. It is a blessing to have someone listen to you. - Ruby Kim ”

# OUR WORLDWIDE REACH

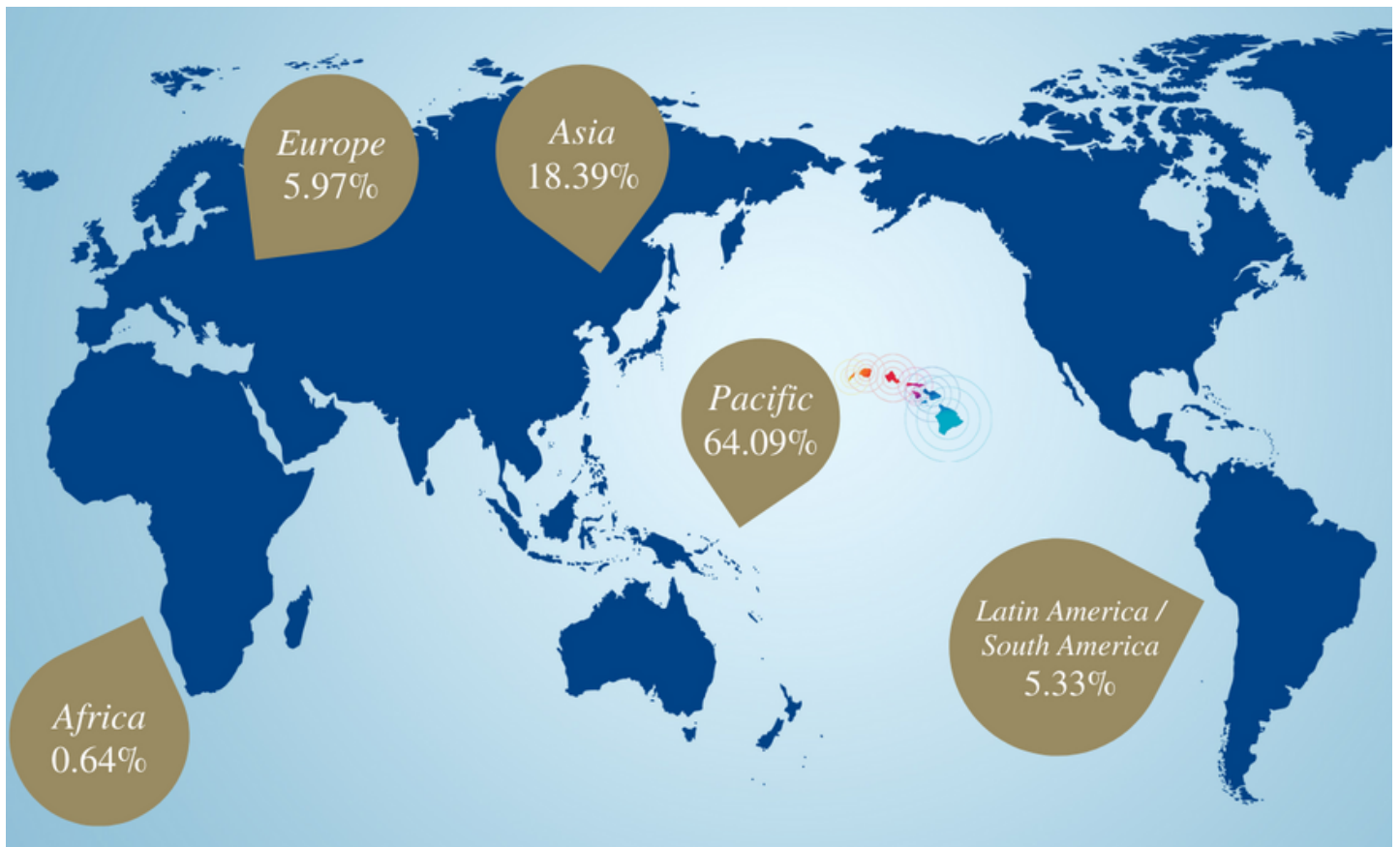
From July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021, we served a total of 1,256 immigrant and migrant clients from different parts of the globe.

From the Pacific Region, the immigrants and migrants served by Legal Aid are the Marshallese, Micronesians, Palauans, Samoans, and Tongans. Asians are comprised of Chinese/Taiwanese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. Other ethnic groups served are Whites, Africans, Latinas/Latinos, Hispanics, Middle Easterners, and Native Hawaiians.

In FY21, Legal Aid served 983 individuals who spoke a language other than English at home. The languages primarily spoken by Legal Aid clients were Micronesian languages like Chuukese, Kosraean, and Marshallese. Other languages included Japanese, Ilokano, Spanish, and Tagalog.

During the pandemic, five individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) filed separate cases of discrimination against the Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR). They did not have full access to the unemployment insurance program due to the lack of interpretation services. But now they do, as do other LEP individuals and non-US citizens.

The complaints were filed with the US Department of Labor's Civil Rights Center (CRC) and on September 20, 2021, with the assistance of Legal Aid in winning each of their individual cases, CRC entered into a voluntary conciliation agreement with DLIR. It was a big win against discrimination.



# COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

The pandemic led to the closing of offices to the public, shifting to remote work, and creatively re-imagining Legal Aid to be able to continue to provide critical legal services. The mass shutdown of tourism and travel led to a cataclysmic increase in requests for legal services to assist with unemployment claims and with potential evictions.

2,400+  
housing cases

550+  
unemployment  
cases

## 2022 FORECAST

As we look to 2022, we expect some of these needs to continue.

- Eviction defense will be one of the key areas of need
- Requests for unemployment assistance are expected to decrease
- Government assistance requests will likely increase
- Debt collection cases, foreclosures, and bankruptcies are expected to increase
- There will likely be an increase in family law cases with domestic violence issues

*Mahalo!*  
for supporting  
Legal Aid's COVID  
Relief Program

“

“I see a big need especially because of COVID and so many people being out of work. And because COVID has unfortunately shifted the imbalance a little more, there would be an even more pressing need.

Every little bit helps. And collectively, we can make a difference.” - Shannon Clark, donor

I was so lost and didn't know what to do. I was at the lowest point of my life when a friend advised that I contact Legal Aid. The attorney and staff were so understanding and helpful!

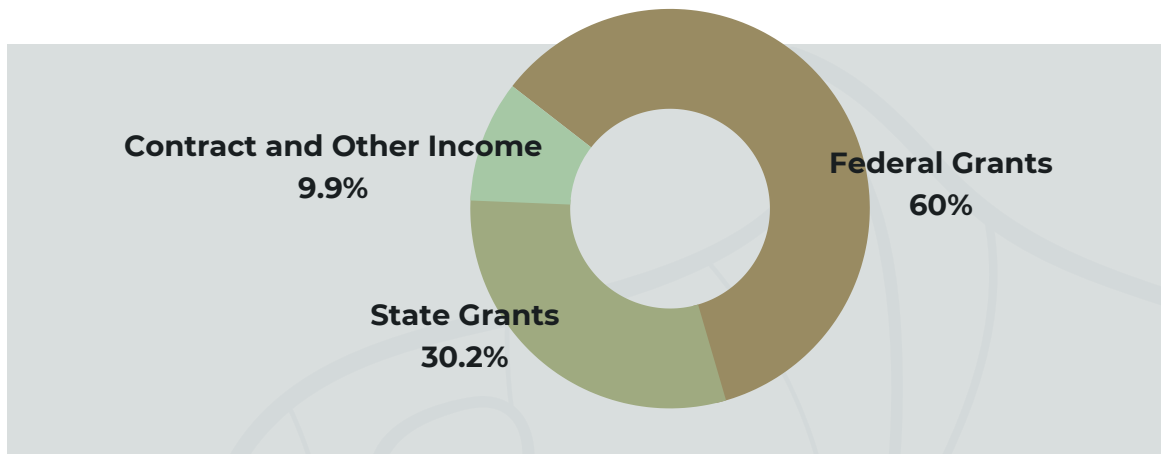
I want people to know that the service is there, and they need to use it. During this time of the pandemic, many of us are facing unemployment issues. I feel that Legal Aid could help thousands of people in Hawaii. - Brooke

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## STATEMENT OF REVENUES

### DOLLARS RECEIVED (IN 000s)

Federal Grants	\$4,682
State Grants	\$2,356
Contract and Other Income	\$770
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,808</b>



## STATEMENT AND EXPENDITURES

### DOLLARS SPENT (IN 000s)

Salaries - Attorneys and Paralegals	\$3,767
Salaries - Management and General	\$999
Benefits	\$1,473
<b>Total Salaries and Benefits</b>	<b>\$6,239</b>
Other Expenses	\$1,251

### BALANCE SHEET 6/30/2021 (IN 000s)

ASSETS	\$7,043
LIABILITIES	\$1,791
NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	\$3,991
With Donor Restrictions	\$1,261
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$5,253</b>

“

I love my job because I am able to do community outreaches and educate my population regarding health insurance. - *Bira Reiher, Outreach Specialist*

It is truly a blessing to be a part of such an amazing organization. I am thankful for Legal Aid because I am given the opportunity every day to help people get their lives back on track whether it's assisting folks with obtaining Social Security Disability benefits, public benefits or vital documents. - *Damione Verducco, Paralegal, Social Security / Homeless Project*

I am thankful for Legal Aid because it promotes justice by helping level the playing field between the haves and the have nots. - *Linda Pizzitola, AmeriCorps Advocate*

I am thankful for Legal Aid because the organization prioritizes employee health and well-being. I love my job because I get to do work that aligns with my personal values, and I enjoy working with my colleagues. - *Scott Shishido, Managing Attorney*

I love my job because of the ability to help folks in the community. I am thankful for Legal Aid because of the sense of purpose my work gives me and the flexibility it offers. - *Makia Minerbi, Managing Attorney*



# OUR STAFF

100 Strong throughout Hawaii

I am thankful for Legal Aid because they actually help the community with real life solutions. - *Malia Connor, Administrative Assistant, Grants*

I am thankful for Legal Aid because it's one of the most well-run, mission-focused nonprofits I've ever worked with, and my coworkers are smart, thoughtful, and compassionate. - *Lisa Sparrell, Director of Grants Management*

I am grateful for the opportunity to use my many, many years of experience assisting the less fortunate in my local community and to have amazing co-workers in the Hilo LASH office as my second ohana. - *Hauhani D. Magalanes, Paralegal*

I am thankful for Legal Aid because I get to work with amazing people who are changing the world for the better - one meaningful life at a time. - *Angela Lovitt, Deputy Director*

I love my job because I am able to support our amazing advocates. I am thankful for Legal Aid because we are making a difference in people's lives every day. - *Joyce Fukata, Human Resource Generalist*

”

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

Thank You!

We are grateful to our Board of Directors who provide unwavering guidance, vision and support to continue our work in building a just and fair society.

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# OUR SUPPORTERS

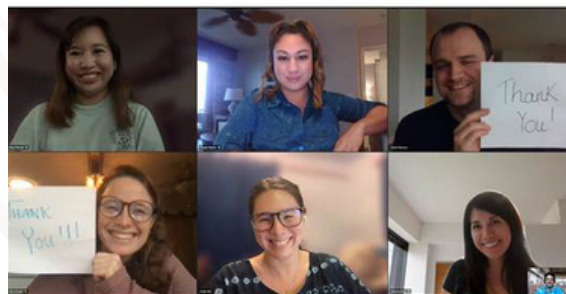
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

*Thank you*

These law firms, corporations, and foundations stand with us in delivering fairness and justice to every child, individual, and family. We are deeply grateful for their support and advocacy to the mission and vision of the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i.

## LAW FIRMS AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

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# OUR SUPPORTERS

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

*Thank you*

By supporting our mission to provide free legal assistance, the partnership of these individuals allows us to continue empowering the most vulnerable in the community.

## INDIVIDUALS

JACKIE ABILEY  
AMANDA AND LLOYD ADAMS  
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PAUL ALSTON  
LUCINA AND STEVE AQUILINA  
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POLLY ARNOLD-LORGE  
RANDALL ASATO  
MARJORIE AU  
CATHERINE AUBUCHON  
GAIL AYABE  
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KRISTINE YOO  
NATALIE YOUNOSZAI  
WILLIAM AND GEORGINA YUEN

# OUR VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

*Mahalo*

Their passion, enthusiasm and commitment never fail to amaze us. We are thankful to our volunteers for sharing their valuable time and experience, and for making a meaningful impact in every person they encounter.

AARON CREPS  
AARON LARRIMORE  
AARON MASSER  
ALANA RASK  
ALEX MATAYOSHI CHUN  
ALICIA FUNG  
ALISON KATO  
ALLISHA MAROTZ  
AMANDA JONES  
AMPARO MCCORMICK  
ANDERSON MEYER  
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CALVIN YOUNG  
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GILBERT DOLES  
GREGORY SCHLAIS  
HARRISON GOO  
HUGO CABRERA  
IKAIKA RAWLINS  
JACKY MENA  
JAIME CHIZU TOKIOKA  
JANA NARUSE  
JANICE HEIDT  
JANJEERA HAIL  
JARRETT DEMPSEY  
JEANILOU MASCHHOFF  
JENNA TATSEY  
JENNIFER CHIN  
JENNIFER OANA  
JENNIFER WHARTON  
JENNIFER ZELKO SCHLUETER  
JEREMY BUTTEFIELD  
JESSICA UCHIDA  
JILL HASEGAWA  
JILL RAZNOV  
JO KIM  
JOANNA SOKOLOV  
JOANNA ZEIGLER  
JODI YAMAMOTO  
JOHN OLSON  
JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA  
JUSTIN BRACKETT  
KAI MCGUIRE  
KAINANI COLLINS ALVAREZ  
KATHERINE VESSELS  
KAYLA FAJOTA  
KEITH YAMADA  
KELCIE NAGATA  
KELLY HIGA  
KEVIN MORRIS  
KEVIN TONGG  
KIMBERLEY ANGAY  
KIMBERLY TANIYAMA  
KIMI IDE-FOSTER  
KRISTI O'HERON  
LANCE COLLINS  
LANSON KUPAU  
LAURA BARZILAI  
LAURA CUSHMAN  
LAURA LUCAS  
LAURA OZAK  
LAUREL LOO  
LAUREL PEPE

LINDSAY MCANEELEY  
LISA BROULIK  
LOREN SEEHASE  
LYNNE TOYOFUKU  
MADELEINE YOUNG  
MAGDALENA BAJON  
MAHEALANI KRAFFT  
MALLORY MARTIN  
MARIA FAGERSTROEM-RYDER  
MARK ITO  
MARK MU  
MARK MURAKAMI  
MATTHEW BRACKEN  
MATTHEW COHEN  
MATTHEW EVANS  
MATTHEW KOLLINGER  
MATTHEW TERRY  
MEGAN LIM  
MEGUMI SAKAE  
MELISSA MARUSHIGE  
MELLISA HALL LAMBERT  
MERLINDA GARMA  
MICHAEL SOON FAH  
MICHELLE CHAPMAN  
MICHELLE OISHI  
MICHI MOMOSE  
MIKE GOODMAN  
MIRIAH HOLDEN  
MOLLY STEBBINS  
NA LAN  
NAOMI IWABUCHI  
NAOMI KUSACHI  
NICHOLAS ERNST  
NICHOLAS KIDO  
NICK KAPROWSKI  
NICOLE ALTMAN  
NICOLE KALAKAU  
ONAONA THOENE  
PAUL ALSTON  
PHIL DUREZA  
PHILLIP CAREY  
POHAI NU'UHIWA CAMPBELL  
PORTER DEVRIES  
RACHEL ZELMAN  
RAYMOND HASEGAWA  
REGAN IWAO  
REMY KEALOHIOKAILIWAI  
AKINA  
REX FUJICHAKU  
REYN ONO  
RIO KWAN  
ROBERT TRIANTOS  
RONALD HUNG WAI LUM, JR.  
RONALD TANG  
ROSS UEHARA-TILTON  
RYAN HAMAGUCHI  
SAE LEE  
SAM SCHNIDER  
SAMANTHA CHAN

SARAH WANG  
SARAH YAN-LING WILLIAMS  
SASHA HAMADA  
SCOT MATAYOSHI  
SCOTT GEORGE MORITA  
SCOTT SHISHIDO  
SEAN HARTLIEB  
SERGIO ALCUBILLA  
SHANLYN PARK  
SHAUNDA LIU  
SKYLAR LUCAS  
STANLEY MAJKA  
STEPHANIE TEECE  
STEVEN TOM  
SUE VO HANSEN  
SUSAN KIM  
SYLVIA WAN  
TERESA TUMBAGA  
TERRI O'CONNELL  
THOMAS BERGER  
TIM PARTELOW  
TINA TSUCHIYAMA  
TOM HUGHES  
TOM ROESSER  
TRAVIS AGUSTIN  
TRED EYERLY  
TRISHA AKAGI  
VLAD DEVENS  
VOLTAIRE GANSIT  
WENDY HANAKAHI  
WIL YAMAMOTO  
WILLIAM BAGASOL  
WILLIAM HEFLIN  
YUKARI MURAKAMI  
YUKLIN ALULI