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Two CLS Board members left the Board in FY14. We wish **Alan Feldman** well in his new role on the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, and all the best to **The Hon. Marilyn Heffley**, who was sworn in as a federal magistrate in May.



*This year, veterans received the benefits they deserved.*



*Our littlest clients got the care they needed.*

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## COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF PHILADELPHIA

Dear Friends,

When writing to you, I can't help but think of gratitude. As Executive Director of Philadelphia's oldest and largest public interest law firm, I have had the privilege of witnessing tens of thousands of clients helped by our caring, expert staff at Community Legal Services (CLS).

Every day, our clients express gratitude to our attorneys for helping them to keep their homes, obtain basic necessities, and take steps towards independence.

They express gratitude to us, and now I pass on gratitude to you. I know that these individuals have been helped because of your support. Please accept our thanks for giving us the resources to make justice possible for some of the most vulnerable people in Philadelphia and beyond.

My gratitude is abundant. On behalf of CLS, I am grateful for the financial support that has allowed us to provide free civil legal services for 48 years and for the friends and community partners who help us in our mission. I am grateful to the staff members who fight tirelessly for justice, and to our clients, whose strength and determination inspire us all. I am grateful that each day we are able to help our clients enforce their legal rights, and that we are part of a strong collaborative community, committed to justice for all.

In this report, you will read the highlights of our last fiscal year. Between the clients we have served directly and the systemic changes we have helped to enact, we have many great things to tell you. In addition to reading our clients' stories, you will hear from some of the people who have helped to make justice possible. I hope that this report gives you both a sense of what CLS has accomplished, and a deeper understanding of how our supporters have made CLS a stronger organization.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2016, I look forward to continuing to communicate with you, not just about what we have accomplished for the thousands of clients we serve, but where we are going as an organization. We are grateful to have you come with us on this journey of community.

Yours very truly,

Catherine C. Carr  
*Executive Director*



*CLS Executive Director Catherine C. Carr with Capital Campaign Co-Chair Ed Chacker, Merck CEO Ken Frazier, and former PA Governor Ed Rendell*



# Our Legal Units



## AGING AND DISABILITIES UNIT

Aging and Disabilities Unit specializes in representing seniors and people with disabilities in a wide range of public benefits and consumer matters, including challenges to denials of Medicaid, Medicare, or disability benefits, decisions by managed care organizations to deny care, and violations of residents’ rights and quality-of-care requirements in nursing homes and personal care homes.



## EMPLOYMENT UNIT

Employment Unit represents clients with employment-related problems, including tackling barriers to employment, seeking unpaid wages, and preserving jobs. The unit advocates at the national and state levels on low-income workers’ rights issues such as preventing overbroad disqualifications of workers with criminal records.



## ENERGY UNIT

Energy Unit works to keep the utilities on for families by protecting the rights of low-income utility customers on service and payment issues, representing group clients on utility rate change cases and serving as the Public Advocate in representing all Philadelphia Gas Works residential customers.



## FAMILY ADVOCACY UNIT

Family Advocacy Unit (FAU) represents individual parents, involved with the Department of Human Services (DHS), who are seeking to keep their children at home or to have them returned from foster care to a safe home. The FAU provides assistance and trainings to community groups, organizations and lawyers. The FAU also advocates on the national, state, and local levels for improvements in child welfare practices, services to families, and the dependency court system.



## HOMEOWNERSHIP AND CONSUMER LAW UNIT

Homeownership and Consumer Law Unit represents homeowners in disputes, residential mortgage foreclosures, fraudulent consumer practices, and issues with banking or check-cashing agencies. The unit uses advocacy and litigation to address the predatory lending crisis, abusive mortgage practices, and other banking issues affecting low-income families.



## HOUSING UNIT

Housing Unit represents private, public, and subsidized housing tenants in matters involving eviction, illegal lockouts, and substandard housing. The unit also uses systems advocacy and litigation to address issues ranging from lead paint elimination, to federal housing policy changes, to tenant eviction laws.



## LANGUAGE ACCESS PROJECT

Language Access Project works to ensure CLS services are available to Philadelphia communities with limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English. The unit addresses legal issues specific to this population and collaborates with other units to represent individuals and families in challenging language barriers to benefits, services, and access to justice.



## PUBLIC BENEFITS UNIT

Public Benefits Unit represents clients seeking or facing termination of public benefits such as cash assistance, SSI disability, food stamps, or health insurance. The unit provides education and outreach services and advocates for improvements to the programs that provide these benefits at the federal, state, and local levels.

# Awards: July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

## Awards presented to Community Legal Services and staff

Community Legal Services  
Recognition of work with immigrants  
*Presented by Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition*

CLS' North Philadelphia Law Center and Clemens Construction Company  
Construction Excellence Award  
*Presented by General Building Contractors Association*

Catherine C. Carr, Esq.  
Woman of the Year  
*Presented by The Legal Intelligencer*

Louise Hayes, Esq.  
Recognition of Service  
*Presented by Lutheran Settlement House*

Nadia Hewka, Esq.  
Crystal Eastman Award  
*Presented by PhilaPOSH*

Carol Horne Penn, Esq.  
Woman of Distinction Award  
*Presented by Barristers' Association of Philadelphia*

Kerry Smith, Esq.  
Legislative Advocate of the Year  
*Presented by National Association of Consumer Advocates*

Rebecca Vallas, Esq.\*  
New Leaders in Advocacy Award  
*Presented by National Legal Aid & Defender Association*

John S. Whitelaw, Esq.  
Suzanne H. Kaye Advocacy Award  
*Presented by Linda Creed Breast Cancer Foundation*

PLAN Excellence Award  
*Presented by Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network*

*\*Employed by CLS at time of nomination*



*Cathy Carr is honored as a Woman of the Year by The Legal Intelligencer.*



## Awards presented by Community Legal Services at our 25th Annual Breakfast of Champions

### Equal Justice Awards

Dennisse Bones, *Community Legal Services*

James A. Francis, Esq., *Francis & Mailman, PC*

The Honorable Marilyn Heffley, *United States Magistrate Judge, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania*

### Champion of Justice Award

Alan M. Feldman, Esq.,  
*Feldman Shepherd Wohlgelehrter Tanner Weinstock & Dodig LLP*



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CLS’ Leadership Council raised more than \$360,000 from 109 law firms and businesses in support of CLS’ Bar Campaign. Donors to the Bar Campaign were honored at CLS’ 25th Annual Breakfast of Champions.

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Alan M. Feldman is named Champion of Justice at Community Legal Services’ 25th Annual Breakfast of Champions. From left, Community Legal Services Deputy Director Debby Freedman; Alan M. Feldman; and Community Legal Services Board Chair Michael LiPuma.



James A. Francis receives an Equal Justice Award at Community Legal Services’ 25th Annual Breakfast of Champions. From left, James A. Francis; Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.; Mark D. Mailman.



CLS Paralegal Dennisse Bones receives an Equal Justice Award at Community Legal Services’ 25th Annual Breakfast of Champions. From Left, CLS Paralegal Diana Espinal; Dennisse’s daughter, Kaylah; Dennisse Bones; CLS Managing Attorney Amy Hirsch; CLS Supervising Attorney Brenda Marrero; CLS Senior Attorney Pam Walz.



# Getting Paid for His Work

**N**ATHANEAL Rodriquez always had a passion for food. “I grew up in a household where we were all cooking together,” the 33-year-old says. He honed his cooking skills by working in food services during his time in the Marines. When Nathaneal came back to Philadelphia, he worked diligently at several restaurants in the city, all under the same owner.

**A**THOUGH he started as a dishwasher, Nathaneal worked his way up to become operations manager at a thriving Center City restaurant. Suddenly, Nathaneal was unable to cash his paychecks and soon realized that he wasn’t the only one with this problem. “My coworkers were taking these checks to banks and check cashing counters all over the city, but no one would accept them,” he says. “[The checks] were frauds.” This problem persisted for months, and Nathaneal went without pay. After countless failed attempts to receive the money he was owed, he decided it was time to leave his employer in February, 2012.

*In addition to his passion for food, Nathaneal is also a musician.*



## Recipe for Fair Wages

- Pay at least minimum wage for all hours worked
- Index the minimum wage to inflation
- Pay overtime for hours worked over 40
- Don't misclassify employees as contractors or managers
- Step up state and federal enforcement of wage laws

In April, Nathaneal faced an even larger problem. “I went to do my taxes and I got a call from the Veterans’ Affairs Administration saying I was going to lose my benefits because I wasn’t reporting wages.” Again, he requested the money he was owed, but he was met with a threat from the owner of the restaurant, who told him it would be a “bad idea to go after him for money.” Afraid to proceed alone for fear of retaliation, he came to CLS in January, 2013.

A team from CLS worked collaboratively to help Nathaneal; they wrote a demand letter to the owner of the restaurant, filed and prepared for the lawsuit, and appeared before a judge, where they won Nathaneal more than \$12,000 in back wages and penalties. Though the judgment was a default because the defendants failed to appear in court to defend themselves, Nathaneal says he wouldn’t have even been able to go to court to receive the judgment without his CLS attorneys. After winning the judgment, CLS negotiated with the owner of the restaurant to work out a payment schedule. The owner complied, and Nathaneal finally received the money he was owed. “If CLS didn’t help me,” Nathaneal says, “I’d still be in agony over those four months when I didn’t get paid.”

## Protecting Restaurant Workers

**C**LS’ Employment Unit has represented hundreds of restaurant workers over the years, recovering stolen wages and enforcing labor laws. The vast majority of our clients facing exploitation in the restaurant business have been undocumented immigrant workers, although our clients fit many other demographic profiles.

Wage theft is a common practice by employers looking to cut costs in this low regulation, low union density industry. We have helped clients with a wide variety of issues, including people who were not paid their last few paychecks, were denied overtime despite working more than 40 hours in a week, had their tips stolen by their employers, had improper deductions from their paychecks, had to pay for dine-and-dash customers, suffered discrimination, and were injured on the job but not given proper medical attention.

In addition to representing clients, our attorneys have worked with the US Department of Labor, Restaurant Opportunities Center, and other community partners to attempt to address some of the rampant abuses in this industry in a more systemic manner.





# Safe from Abuse

**I**T is no secret that violence in the streets is one of Philadelphia's most pervasive problems. Often unseen, however, is the rampant violence hidden within Philadelphia's homes, despite its widespread, cross-cultural, and cross-generational presence.<sup>1</sup>

**E**VEN more unrealized are the collateral effects of sexual and domestic abuse; victims suffer not only the physical<sup>2</sup> and emotional consequences of abuse<sup>3</sup>, but also the legal issues that arise, such as denial of housing, or eviction based on past incidents of violence. Although more than 100,000 domestic violence reports are filed to the Philadelphia Police Department annually, the city has just two shelters designated for victims of domestic violence, with only 200 beds. Housing discrimination, coupled with a crippling lack of resources for victims of domestic and sexual violence, often leaves the abused with nowhere to turn but the streets.

CLS regularly assists clients who face housing instability due to discrimination based on past incidents of domestic or sexual violence. Erica\* is one of them.

Like many others in her situation, Erica was forced to flee her home because of violence. She called her former landlord to let him know that she wanted her name removed from the lease. At the time, no one had told her about the new law that CLS had worked with Councilman Greenlee to have passed, which allowed her, as a domestic violence victim, to legally terminate her lease early.

When Erica then applied for public housing, she was shocked to learn that the Philadelphia Housing Authority denied her application because of a landlord tenant judgment against her—a judgment she never knew about. Erica's landlord never removed her name from the lease, and her abuser never paid the rent after she moved out. A year later, the landlord sued both Erica and her abuser and got a default judgment against both of them for approximately \$10,000 of rent.

Erica's story echoes a problem faced by many of those who have experienced domestic and sexual violence: victimization that continues after their initial abuse. Erica was victimized not only by her abuser, but also by her landlord, and by the Housing Authority that denied her access to housing—for which she was otherwise eligible—based on an issue related to domestic violence.

CLS has been assisting people like Erica while serving as an advocate in the fight to extend housing rights to victims of sexual and domestic violence.

In 2005, Congress amended the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to include valuable housing protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, who are applying for or living in subsidized housing. In 2013, Congress again amended VAWA to extend these protections to people who have been sexually assaulted and to individuals applying to or living in all types of federally subsidized housing.<sup>4</sup>

CLS has worked closely with the Philadelphia Housing Authority and other subsidized housing providers to ensure their compliance with VAWA's amendments. CLS has also worked with domestic and sexual violence agencies in Philadelphia to train staff and clients on VAWA's housing protections, and on the steps people who have experienced domestic and sexual violence can take to access and maintain safe and stable housing for their families. Since CLS began its



<sup>1</sup> "Domestic violence affects individuals from all backgrounds, genders and socioeconomic statuses" (WAA)

<sup>2</sup> Over 2,000 visits are made each year to Philadelphia emergency rooms by those who have been assaulted by a partner or ex-partner (WAA)

<sup>3</sup> "Victims of domestic violence face elevated risk of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse..." (WAA)

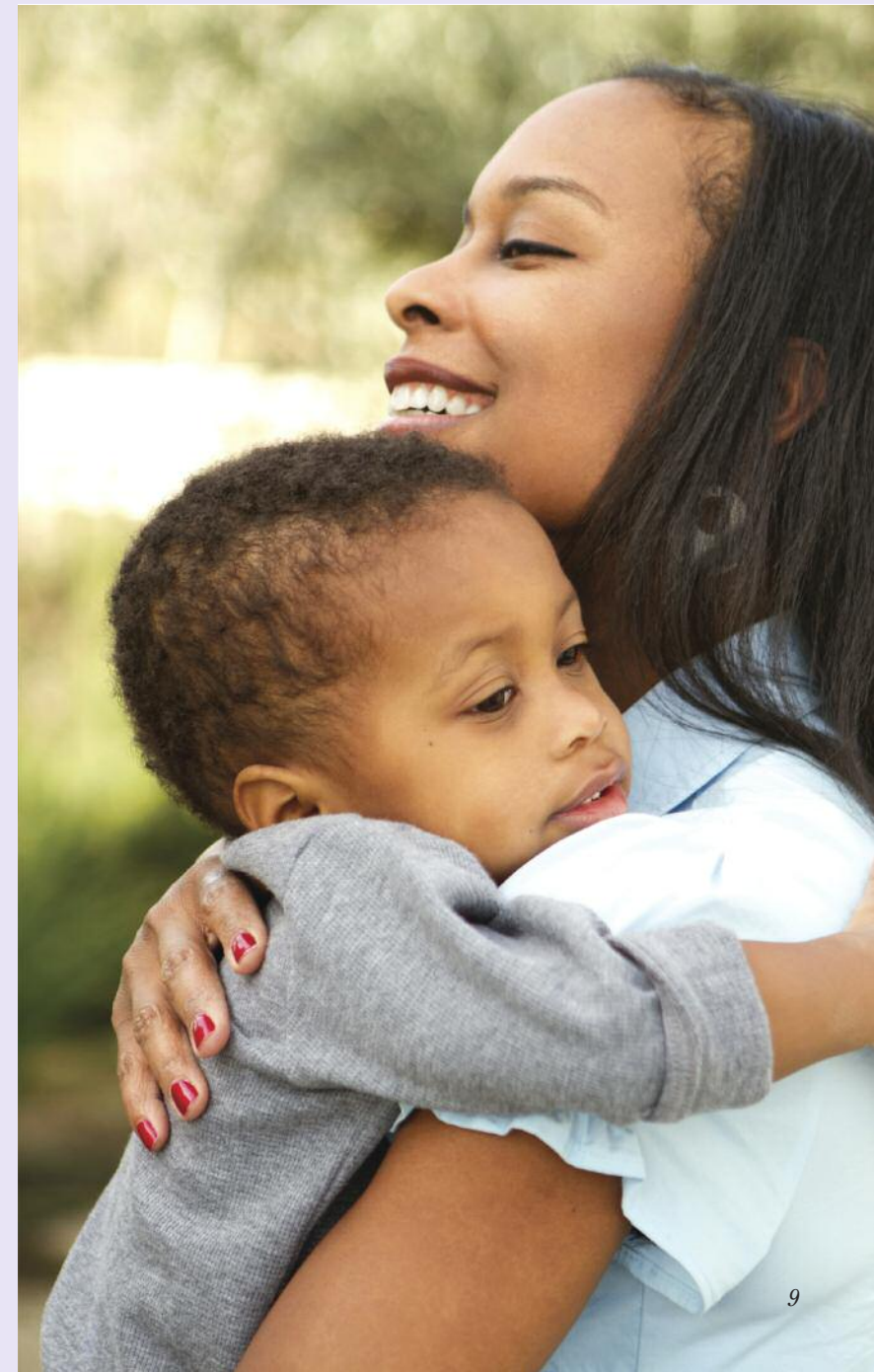
<sup>4</sup> National Housing Law Project, VAWA 2013 Continues Vital Housing Protections for Survivors and Provides New Safeguards

partnership with these organizations, the number of victims of domestic and sexual violence that CLS' housing unit assists has significantly increased, many of them coming as direct referrals from the agencies.

CLS has also been at the forefront of the local movement to extend these housing protections to private tenants. CLS has partnered with the Tenant Union Representative Network, a local tenants' rights organization; former CLS housing attorney Rue Landau, who currently directs the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations; and Councilman Greenlee, who was active in protecting victims of domestic violence in the workplace. CLS, along with these partners, first worked to classify people who have experienced domestic and sexual violence as a protected class under the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance in 2011. In 2012, CLS and its partners were successful in amending Philadelphia's Unfair Rental Practices Ordinance to include critical protections for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

CLS' persistent advocacy and commitment to providing housing rights for victims of domestic and sexual violence has yielded meaningful results; in the spring of 2014, CLS represented Erica at her admissions hearing with PHA to appeal the denial of her application. CLS presented VAWA's Domestic Violence Certification form in support of Erica's defense that she cannot be denied admission to public housing due to incidents of domestic violence. PHA granted Erica's appeal, and she now lives in her own public housing unit with her children. In addition, CLS has worked with many domestic and sexual violence victims to successfully terminate their leases early so that they can move into safe housing.

\*Name has been changed.





# Because of our donors...our clients are free to succeed.



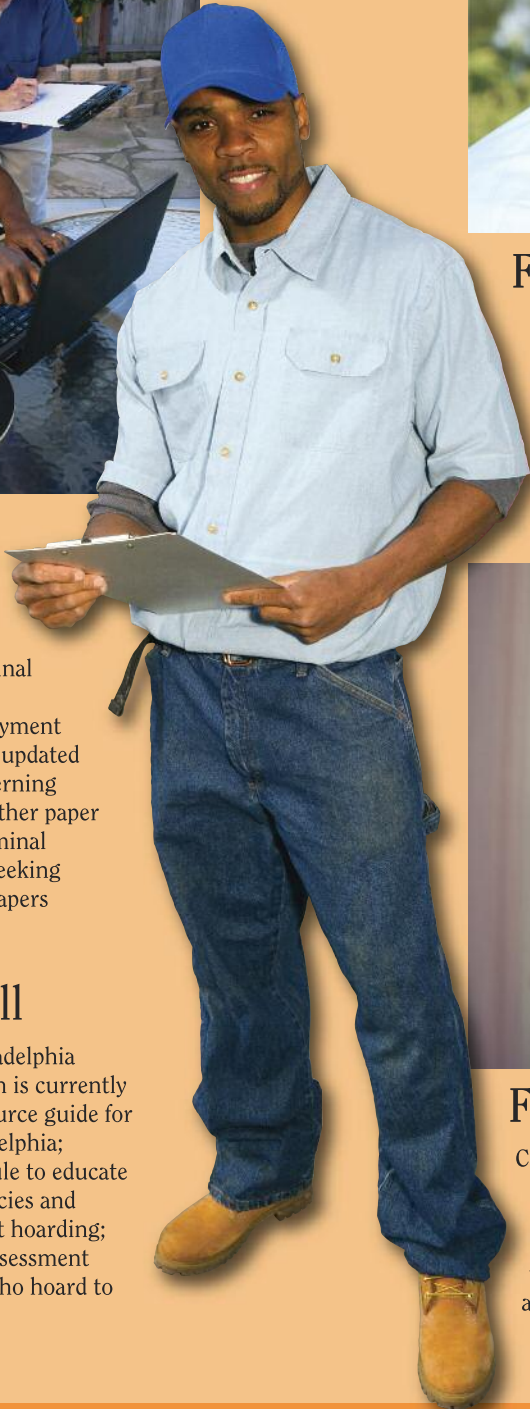
## Free to stay healthy

CLS worked with DPW after we received many referrals of elderly and disabled clients whose Medicaid in-home long term care services had been erroneously terminated, often because renewals were either not being processed on time or were being processed incorrectly. A number of these clients were in their late 80s or 90s, and were left with no aide to help them with basic needs like dressing and preparing food. As a result of our advocacy, DPW agreed to increase staffing and put protections in place to ensure that appeals are timely processed and benefits continued.



## Free to thrive

CLS advocated at the state and federal levels on behalf of Pennsylvanians in need of health care. Advocacy has successfully led to the preservation of the Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) program, which provides Medicaid benefits to approximately 36,000 significantly disabled working Pennsylvanians.



## Free to communicate

After advocacy by and with technical assistance from CLS and other community organizations, the Philadelphia Housing Authority Board of Commissioners adopted a strong language access policy in November 2013. Under the policy, PHA will begin routinely identifying the need for and providing appropriate language services in the form of bilingual staff, interpretation, and translated documents to ensure effective communication with limited English proficient applicants, residents and housing voucher holders.



## Free to save a home

CLS worked with Philadelphia City Council to shape, enforce, and expand programs to help homeowners with property taxes, including programs that benefit elderly people who are homebound, ill, or who do not speak or read English well. Our advocacy worked to ensure that low-income homeowners were provided a fair opportunity to enter into affordable payment agreements and save their homes.

## Free to nourish

CLS recommended that Pennsylvania continue its "Heat and Eat" program to prevent significant reductions in monthly food stamp benefits to thousands of low-income households, including many elderly and disabled individuals. A federal law change had threatened "Heat and Eat," but CLS advocacy was successful in preserving the program.



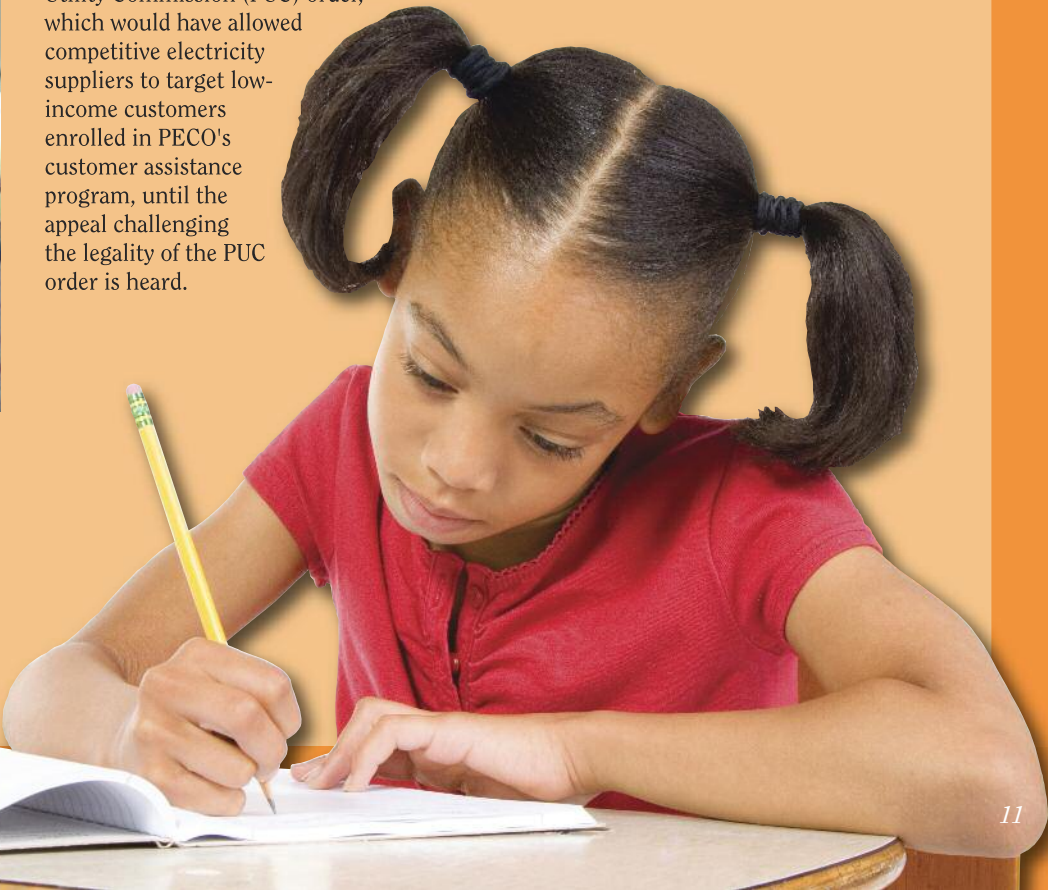
## Free to participate

CLS worked with Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS) to launch a pilot program that allows parents incarcerated at PPS to be video-conferenced into all meetings regarding their children. We also continued statewide advocacy aimed at improving the engagement of incarcerated parents in their child welfare cases.



## Free to trust

CLS and the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project convinced the Commonwealth Court to suspend implementation of a PA Public Utility Commission (PUC) order, which would have allowed competitive electricity suppliers to target low-income customers enrolled in PECO's customer assistance program, until the appeal challenging the legality of the PUC order is heard.



Our advocacy reaches the city, state, and beyond.  
Thanks to our donors, we are free to make a difference.



# Continuity of Care



**S**ARAH, 24, was first helped by CLS as a child. She was diagnosed with a severe case of sickle cell anemia at a young age. Sarah qualified for SSI (Supplementary Security Income), and her CLS attorney helped win her case when she was three years old. The SSI support helped Sarah get the medical attention she needed to stay healthy throughout her childhood.

Although Sarah had managed her illness for years, her health suddenly worsened. After being denied three times, Sarah came to CLS for help filing a new disability case. Her attorney was certain that she should qualify for SSI.

**B**y the time Sarah turned 18, her condition had improved, so she dropped her SSI case. She was even able to pursue a nursing degree while working part time. However, her health suddenly worsened, and she was often in and out of the emergency room. She could not afford the expensive treatments and medicine to help her properly manage her sickle cell anemia, so her flare-ups always became critical.

“At the time I didn’t have health insurance, I was going to the hospital, and sometimes they couldn’t see me. I couldn’t have a primary care doctor. I couldn’t even go to my hematology appointments,” Sarah described. “It really impacted my life tremendously, not being able to see the specialists I needed to see and get my medications.”

After being denied three times, Sarah came to CLS for help filing a new disability case. She worked with the same attorney who helped win her SSI case when she was a child. Sarah’s attorney knew it would be difficult to prove the

intensity of her sickness; despite being extremely ill, Sarah fought through the pain and completed her degree, which would work against her in demonstrating that her case of sickle cell was severely impacting her life. Sarah’s CLS attorney, who was familiar with her history and knew how much she had suffered, was certain that she should qualify for SSI.

Sarah’s attorney pored over her medical records and discovered—and successfully proved—that she was eligible under an esoteric Listing of Impairments. “I don’t think the average person could get approved without an expert,” Sarah noted. “When [my attorney] presented my case with all the facts and all my records, they looked at it differently.”

Sarah was able to get her benefits reinstated and was thrilled to find out that her work history also qualified her for Social Security Disability. Even more importantly, Sarah is now covered by Medicaid and Medicare, which means she can get the costly treatments she needs to avoid the emergency room.

Having stable and reliable health insurance has made all the difference in Sarah’s life. “I don’t get many sickle cell crises because I’m able to control it. I have a better grip on my sickle cell, and now it’s well managed,” she said. “Before I was feeling about a 2, and now I’m feeling like a 9.”

**“I don’t get many sickle cell crises because I’m able to control it. I have a better grip on my sickle cell, and now it’s well managed. Before I was feeling about a 2, and now I’m feeling like a 9.”**





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On April 24, Ken Frazier, Chairman, President and CEO of Merck & Co., spoke at an event at CLS' North Philadelphia Law Center, recognizing leadership donors to CLS' Capital Campaign. In his speech, Mr. Frazier spoke about CLS, social justice, and growing up in North Philadelphia.

To read his speech, visit [www.clsphila.org/kenfrazier](http://www.clsphila.org/kenfrazier)

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“CLS makes the greatest impact where it is most needed. To be able to partner with their staff in the work they do so passionately is a privilege.”

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Kay Kyungsun Yu at the Justice For All 5K

“As CLS fights tirelessly for Justice For All, it is an honor to support the cause.”



– Kay Kyungsun Yu  
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Statement of Activities

July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014

|                                   | Total         | Capital Campaign | General Operations |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT           |               |                  |                    |
| Contracts & Grants .....          | \$ 7,648,887  | 166,413          | 7,482,474          |
| Charitable Gifts .....            | \$ 3,890,904  | 337,080          | 3,553,824          |
| Attorney Fees.....                | \$ 81,218     |                  | 81,218             |
| Interest Income .....             | \$ 59,478     | 58,335           | 1,143              |
| Subtotal Revenue.....             | \$ 11,680,487 | 561,828          | 11,118,659         |
| EXPENSES                          |               |                  |                    |
| Program Services .....            | \$ 8,706,958  | 70,152           | 8,636,806          |
| Management and General .....      | \$ 1,478,804  |                  | 1,478,804          |
| Fundraising .....                 | \$ 383,921    |                  | 383,921            |
| Total Expenses .....              | \$ 10,569,683 | 70,152           | 10,499,531         |
| Change in Assets .....            | \$ 1,110,804  | 491,676          | 619,128            |
| NET ASSETS                        |               |                  |                    |
| Beginning of Year, restated ..... | \$ 9,096,698  | 4,973,119        | 4,123,579          |
| End of Year .....                 | \$ 10,207,502 | 5,464,795        | 4,742,707          |



For almost 50 years, Community Legal Services has provided direct representation, systemic advocacy, and community education to low-income Philadelphians.

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Pictured: Community Legal Services advocates conduct a client meeting in the Morgan, Lewis & Bockius Conference Room at the North Philadelphia Law Center.