

The *Power* to *End Homelessness*

2019 // ANNUAL REPORT



NATIONAL
HOMELESSNESS
LAW CENTER



Our Mission

The National Homelessness Law Center is the only national legal advocacy organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness.

We work in communities across the country to serve America's more than 3.5 million homeless people.

With the support of an extensive network of pro bono lawyers, we use our legal expertise to help pass, implement, and enforce laws addressing the immediate and long-term needs of those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

In partnership with state and local advocates, we work toward strengthening the social safety net through advocacy and advocacy training, public education, and impact litigation.

Our History

The Law Center was founded in 1989 by Maria Foscarinis.

Early in her legal career at the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, she recognized how legal systemic change could be brought to bear to prevent and end homelessness.

After Maria and her colleagues won a federal court class action suit on behalf of homeless families, she devoted herself full-time in 1985 to end homelessness.

Ultimately, the efforts put forth by Maria and others resulted in the 1987 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the first major federal legislation to address the crisis of homelessness.

In 1989, Maria founded the Law Center to catalyze the efforts of homelessness advocates and allies at the national, state, and local levels.

Our Values

The Law Center believes in a society that has enough for all and in which no one should have to go without the basic necessities of life.

We believe that:

- ◆ All human beings have inherent value and dignity.
- ◆ Housing is a human right.
- ◆ It is possible to end homelessness in the United States.
- ◆ Vulnerable groups are disproportionately and uniquely impacted by homelessness.
- ◆ Homeless and at-risk people are empowered by reflecting their voices and experiences.
- ◆ The Law Center's advocacy is most powerful in collaboration with others.
- ◆ Transparency and accountability to our funders and stakeholders are essential.

Message from the Executive Director & Chair of the Board of Directors

Dear Friends:

During 2019, the the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty—now the National Homelessness Law Center—celebrated a significant milestone – 30 years of using the power of the law to end homelessness in the United States.

The past three decades have brought legal and policy victories from the local to the national levels. The Law Center has helped people experiencing homelessness receive more humane treatment at the hands of law enforcement and public agencies, retain their civil rights, and access increased housing and support services.

We are both gratified and humbled by hundreds of like-minded friends who have joined our movement and who give momentum to our efforts. We reached our achievements by working with pro bono attorneys and firms, public officials, national and local organizations, and grassroots advocates—many with lived experience of homelessness—who bring invaluable expertise and dedication to the table.

And we honor those who comprise the Law Center – our staff, fellows, interns, volunteers, and Board of Directors – and our donors who make our work possible.

To all of you, we say a profound and heart-felt, “Thank you.”

2019 brought some of the Law Center's most significant achievements to date, including:

- ◆ After nearly a decade of court filings, *Martin v. City of Boise* will be nationally influential in ending the persecution of homeless individuals sleeping outdoors when no alternatives are available.
- ◆ The right to freedom of speech by those who are homeless was upheld in *Norton v. Springfield* and was the focus of our #IAskForHelpBecause Campaign that reached 37 cities in eight states.
- ◆ Over 1,000 entities and individuals endorsed the Law Center's Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, supporting housing-based solutions to homelessness and rejecting the use of law enforcement to incarcerate and punish people who are homeless.
- ◆ Our National Forum on the Human Right to Housing and numerous publications documented laws affecting homeless individuals and shared strategies.

- ◆ We helped to protect the legal rights of almost 250,000 homeless children and youth throughout the country to gain access to education and other critical resources.
- ◆ Through a congressional briefing and 2020 Election Guide, the Law Center elevated housing as a human right at the federal level and in the presidential campaign.

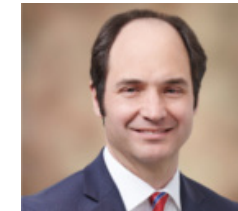
As we and our network move forward, battles fought in cities and states will take on even greater importance, while federal level opportunities can create large-scale change. We look forward to sharing with you all that we will accomplish in 2020.

In solidarity,



Maria Foscarinis

Maria Foscarinis
Founder & Executive Director



Eric A. Bensky

Eric A. Bensky
Chairman, Board of Directors

P.S. As we write, the COVID-19 global pandemic underscores the vulnerability of homeless individuals. People without shelter cannot safely “shelter in place” and readily access hand-washing and other sanitation facilities.

Those who are disproportionately caught in the web of homelessness include people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, youth, domestic abuse victims, single-parent households, military veterans, and low-income individuals.

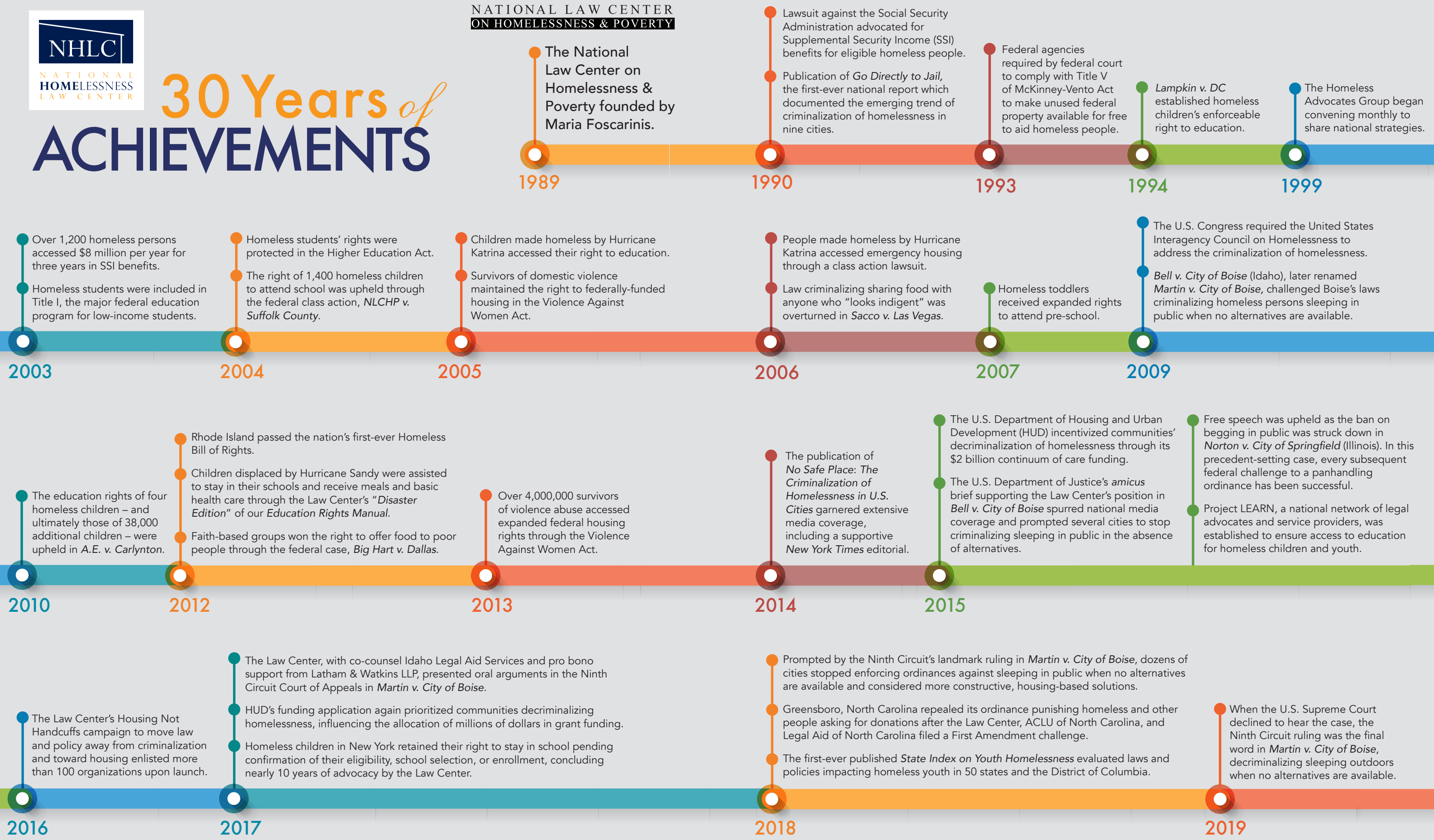
Their health, freedoms, and lives are at stake.

We at the Law Center thank all of you who share our belief that our homeless neighbors are worthy of affordable housing, justice, and opportunity.



30 Years of ACHIEVEMENTS

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



THE POWER OF IMPACT // 2019 by the Numbers

9 legal actions were taken and cases were supported by the Law Center and 48 Housing Not Handcuffs Justice Network members in order to protect against criminalization and encourage affirmative solutions.

17 constructive laws were enacted, policies were adopted, or implementing actions taken protecting some aspect of the right to housing.

39 law firms and corporate legal departments donated pro bono legal services valued at more than **\$5.1 million** for more than **8,600 hours** to assist in more than **85 projects**.

70 cities (and counting) repealed, reviewed, or readdressed their panhandling laws in response to the Law Center's actions.

More than 130 allies attended the National Forum on the Human Right to Housing in June.

203 criminalizing laws or policies were prevented, struck down, repealed or otherwise reversed – not counting those that will be influenced by *Martin v. City of Boise*.

277 organizations or individuals joined the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, bringing the number of endorsements to **more than 1,000**.

Nearly 300 articles in print and online media featured the Law Center.

246,000 homeless children and youth gained access to education and other critical rights through know-your-rights guides, a cutting-edge online manual, and a network of advocates.

3.5 million homeless families, children, and individuals benefitted from the Law Center's work.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION // 2019 Publications, Resources, and Webinars

During 2019, the Law Center developed publications and tools documenting homelessness-related initiatives and providing advocacy tools.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

- ◆ *Let's Talk Housing: An Election 2020 Guide to the Human Right to Housing* – Calls for all 2020 presidential candidates to support policies to end and prevent homelessness. <https://nlchp.org/election2020guide/>

CRIMINALIZATION

- ◆ *Housing Not Handcuffs 2019: Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* – Covers the affordable housing crisis and punitive approaches that do not solve homelessness. Includes policy recommendations to end criminalization and promote housing as a first approach. <http://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/HOUSING-NOT-HANDCUFFS-2019-FINAL.pdf>
- ◆ *National Forum on the Human Right to Housing* – Recap of the June 2019 gathering of allies against homelessness in Washington, DC. Includes strategies and next steps.
- ◆ <http://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Forum-Report-FINAL.pdf>

YOUTH

- ◆ *2019 State Index on Youth Homelessness* – A 50-state review of policies and laws related to youth homelessness published with True Colors United. Supported by a webinar attended by 160 individuals. <https://truecolorsunited.org/index/>
- ◆ *Alone Without a Home: A National Review of State Laws Affecting Unaccompanied Youth* – A state-by-state review of laws in 13 key issue areas affecting unaccompanied, homeless youth. <https://nlchp.org/alone-without-a-home-2019/>
- ◆ *Washington, DC Homeless Youth Handbook: Legal Issues and Options* – Helps local homeless youth know their legal rights and access support services to which they are entitled. Co-created with the Walt Disney Company and Baker McKenzie. <https://www.homelessyouth.org/us/washington-dc>

EDUCATION

- ◆ *A Know Your Rights Toolkit for Families who Lack Stable Housing* – A resource for homeless parents to keep their children in school. In Spanish and English. <https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/mvtoolkitfederal2019.pdf>
- ◆ <http://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NLCHP-Federal-Toolkit-Spanish-PRINT.pdf>



THE POWER OF THE LAW // Pursuing Justice Through the Courts

During 2019, from Florida to Washington, the Law Center, assisted by our legal and nonprofit partners, won legal victories protecting the rights and dignity of homeless individuals. The effects of victories in cities were felt throughout states and the nation.

Below are just a few of the many cases to which we contributed our expertise during 2019.

CALIFORNIA

In *Bloom v. City of San Diego*, the Law Center fought for the right of disabled homeless people to live in their vehicles without fear of police harassment. Following a 2018 victory, we are continuing to fight in light of a legal setback in May 2019.

FLORIDA

In *Vigue v. Shoar*, the Law Center and friends were on the side of the First Amendment protecting free speech and homeless individuals' right to publicly ask for help. A settlement in September 2019 has ramifications throughout Florida limiting enforcement of unconstitutional statutes.

IDAHO

After nearly a decade, *Martin v. City of Boise* is now binding in the nine states comprising the U.S. Court of Appeals' Ninth Circuit, and nationally influential precedent. When the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case, the Ninth Circuit's decision was allowed to stand, eliminating criminal punishment for homeless individuals sleeping outside when no indoor alternatives are available. A special thanks to the pro bono team at Latham & Watkins LLP for their extraordinary work on this case.

WASHINGTON

In *Boyle v. City of Puyallup*, homeless individuals won the right to advance written notice of encampment clean-ups in Pierce County and free property storage to people living outside.

In *Long v. City of Seattle*, the Law Center and others moved forward the argument that policies unfairly punishing people who live in vehicles violate the U.S. Constitution's Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. Laws restricting living in vehicles worsen the homelessness crisis and waste limited taxpayer resources on harmful enforcement practices.

THE POWER OF ADVOCACY & EDUCATION // Changing Laws to Prevent and End Homelessness

In both the courts and the court of public opinion, the Law Center is prompting recognition that housing is the only way to end homelessness and that those who are experiencing homelessness deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Each of the Law Center's successes has an effect beyond the immediate, as legal precedents influence other cases, decisionmakers take notice, and policies are determined.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY

ADVOCATING TO END HOMELESSNESS

The Law Center was honored to submit testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Financial Services advocating for a housing-first approach to address the crisis of homelessness and decriminalizing life-sustaining actions of those experiencing homelessness.

In January, we and others convened a congressional briefing with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, calling on elected officials to name housing as a human right and to put in place supportive policies.

The Law Center testified before the Federal Property Review Board to support strengthening Title V of the McKinney-Vento Act, which makes vacant federal property available for free to nonprofit organizations to use for housing, shelter, and services for homeless people.

The Law Center and the National Low Income Housing Coalition provided guidance to Congress on protections for low-income victims of presidentially-declared disasters, including those who are housing-insecure or homeless.

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR THOSE MOST VULNERABLE

To prevent relationship violence victims from becoming further victimized – having their federal housing jeopardized by their abusers' actions – the Law Center and the National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence drafted amendments to strengthen housing protections under the Violence Against

Women Act (VAWA). Keeping victims and their children housed will stabilize these families and prevent the further trauma and upheaval of homeless children.

The Law Center was one of several organizations advocating to protect the rights of low-income, immigrant families and individuals seeking federal housing and food assistance, and led organizations working on housing and homelessness to oppose the Administration's harsh "public charge rule," resulting in over 200,000 public comments in opposition to this rule, which threatened to make poor immigrants homeless. In addition, we produced educational "know your rights" materials for those at risk and for immigrant advocacy organizations.

DECRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development prioritized the decriminalization of homelessness in its 2019 funding application, affecting the distribution of millions of dollars to localities that treat homeless individuals with respect. Thanks to advocacy by the Law Center and others, this HUD priority has been in place since 2015.

The actions of the executive branch of the current federal administration yet require constant vigilance from the Law Center and other allies determined to prevent and end homelessness. The Law Center leveraged the finding of *Martin v. City of Boise*, which decriminalized sleeping outdoors when no other alternatives are available, to avert a rumored Executive Order in late 2019 which would have increased harmful criminalization practices and reduced the emphasis on housing as the solution to homelessness.

Under the guise of supporting law enforcement, a September 2019 white paper articulated the federal administration's preference for placing homeless individuals in "transitional places" that may more closely resemble jail-like shelters than the assistance needed to stabilize lives and end homelessness. The Law Center will continue to monitor any proposed actions.

STATE AND LOCAL ADVOCACY

PERSONAL SAFETY AT RISK

Through formal complaints and public records requests to Los Angeles, California and Portland, Oregon, the Law Center, along with regional and national allies, are working to establish homeless individuals as a protected class. Too many incidents of vigilantism have targeted people experiencing homelessness, threatening their safety, personal property, and privacy.

SWINGING THE PENDULUM BACK TOWARD DECRIMINALIZATION

The interference of the governor of Texas in the City of Austin's homelessness decriminalization policies resulted in the reinstatement of some punitive rules. In this environment, the Law Center continued to emphasize that criminalization is costly and ineffective, and that an approach emphasizing housing, not handcuffs, is the best way to prevent and end homelessness.

PRESERVING FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The Law Center leveraged the 2015 landmark ruling in *Norton v. City of Springfield* (Illinois) which declared most anti-panhandling laws unconstitutional, launching our #IAskForHelpBecause Campaign to press for more cities across the United States to repeal panhandling ordinances and to instead adopt constructive approaches, such as promoting jobs and housing.

THE POWER OF ORGANIZING // Strength in Numbers to Create Impact

Through our Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, the Law Center is building relationships and a network to push against the criminalization of homelessness – and to move forward policies to end homelessness.

During 2019, we welcomed an additional 277 friends to the Housing Not Handcuffs (HNN) Campaign, with endorsements from law firms and attorneys, youth and criminal justice advocacy groups, civil rights activists, and public officials. Campaign members now number more than 1,000.

The June 2019 National Forum on the Human Right to Housing attracted more than 115 attendees, including more than 20 travel scholarships for current and formerly homeless individuals. The full Forum report summarizing upcoming strategies may be found at: <http://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Forum-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

2019 brought the activism of the HNN Justice Network, an invitation-only group of more than 50 attorneys who strategize monthly against laws criminalizing homelessness. Wins in

Seattle and Orange County, California reinforced the rights of a homeless man living in his vehicle and brought clarity to how *Martin v. City of Boise* will be applied.

Through the 2019 #IAskForHelpBecause Campaign, 12 partner organizations in eight states reached out to 37 cities across the country to discourage punitive measures against people experiencing homelessness.

In recognition of the disproportionate representation of people of color in the homeless population, the Law Center is working with the National Racial Equity Working Group of national housing and homeless organizations, including Funders Together to End Homelessness. This group is working to aggregate philanthropic resources to advance racial equity in addressing federal threats to housing and roll-backs of decriminalization efforts.

The Law Center's messages were amplified through 15,000 Twitter followers, nearly 15,000 Facebook followers, and nearly 400 Instagram followers. These connections help to spread the word and continue our momentum.



THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP // Honoring Leaders Committed to Ending Homelessness

MCKINNEY-VENTO AWARDS

The Law Center owes much to our allies who provide not only legal assistance and policy expertise, and also inspire us with their dedication to end homelessness. Our McKinney-Vento Awards dinner in November 2019 honored:

- ◆ The Walt Disney Company and Baker McKenzie were honored with the Stewart B. McKinney Award for their pro bono assistance in creating the *DC Homeless Youth Handbook* so local homeless youth could know and claim their legal rights. Armed with the *Handbook*, the thousands of homeless youth in our nation's capital will be able to access health care, housing, and education, and avoid penalties for truancy and other status crimes.
- ◆ Representative Joyce Beatty (OH-3) accepted the Bruce F. Vento Award for her advocacy on behalf of homeless veterans and victims fleeing domestic violence through the Violence Against Women Act.
- ◆ The extraordinary efforts of JPMorgan Chase, & Co., Goodwin LLP, and HighQ were acknowledged with the Pro Bono Counsel Award for their assistance in creating an electronic legal resource bank. Advocates everywhere will draw on these materials to protect the rights of people experiencing homelessness.
- ◆ Khadijah Williams was recognized with the Personal Achievement Award. From experiencing homelessness as a teen in Los Angeles to graduating from Harvard College, Khadijah is an outstanding example of the importance of the McKinney-Vento Act's provision for ensuring access to education for homeless children. The Law Center welcomed her to our Board of Directors in 2019.
- ◆ The pro bono team at Latham & Watkins LLP received a first-ever, specially-created Extraordinary Service Award. Latham & Watkins LLP worked by our side tirelessly as we brought *Martin v. City of Boise* to a close. When the Supreme Court declined to hear the case in fall 2019, the Ninth Circuit ruling proved the final word in decriminalizing sleeping outdoors when no other alternatives are available.

LEAP (Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners) LUNCHEON

This annual event in May honors our special allies who provide pro bono legal strategies and assistance for the fight against homelessness. The 55 lawyers representing 20 law firms were acknowledged by keynote speaker and long-time homeless advocate, Representative Katie Hill (CA-25).



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS // Building Networks to Expand Capacity and Leverage Resources

The Law Center is joined in our vision to prevent and end homelessness by numerous law firms, law firm partners, corporate legal departments, legal organizations, and attorneys who bring to bear their dedication and expertise. These volunteers exponentially magnify the Law Center's effectiveness at the local, state, and federal levels.

LEAP (Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners)

LEAP contributes strategic thinking and legal research to develop effective litigation strategies and legal briefs to keep homeless children in school, house the homeless, and fight the criminalization of homelessness.

Individual attorneys also provide direct legal assistance to individuals and families experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

With these allies by our side, the Law Center's reach extends far beyond what our small staff could accomplish.

In 2019, pro bono legal services from 39 law firms were valued at more than \$5.1 million – assisting on more than 85 projects.

PROJECT LEARN (Lawyers' Education Advocacy Resource Network)

Project LEARN focuses on ensuring that children experiencing homelessness continue to access free public education as mandated by the McKinney Vento Act.

For homeless students, an uninterrupted education in their same school may be one of their few touchstones of stability and access to support services during a time of turmoil.

Through Project LEARN, 90 of the Law Center's friends from legal aid services, civil rights organizations, and homeless and children's advocacy groups in 27 states work with homeless liaisons, service providers, and homeless parents. Services focus on assessing youth eligibility, providing guidance on transportation issues, and conducting know-your-rights trainings.

Through quarterly convenings, the Law Center ensures that Project LEARN members have the information and resources they need, while this network informs the Law Center what is happening on the ground.

HOMELESS ADVOCATES GROUP

The Law Center's network of 33 organizational allies pool knowledge and networks on a monthly basis to prevent and end homelessness. Through a focus on national level policy, our work collectively is greater than what any of us could achieve alone. The HAG alliance brings powerful attention and weight to our issues.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE // 2019 Supporters

The Law Center extends its warmest gratitude to the law firms, corporations, foundations, and individuals whose stalwart support has made possible our achievements during 2019.

\$100,000+

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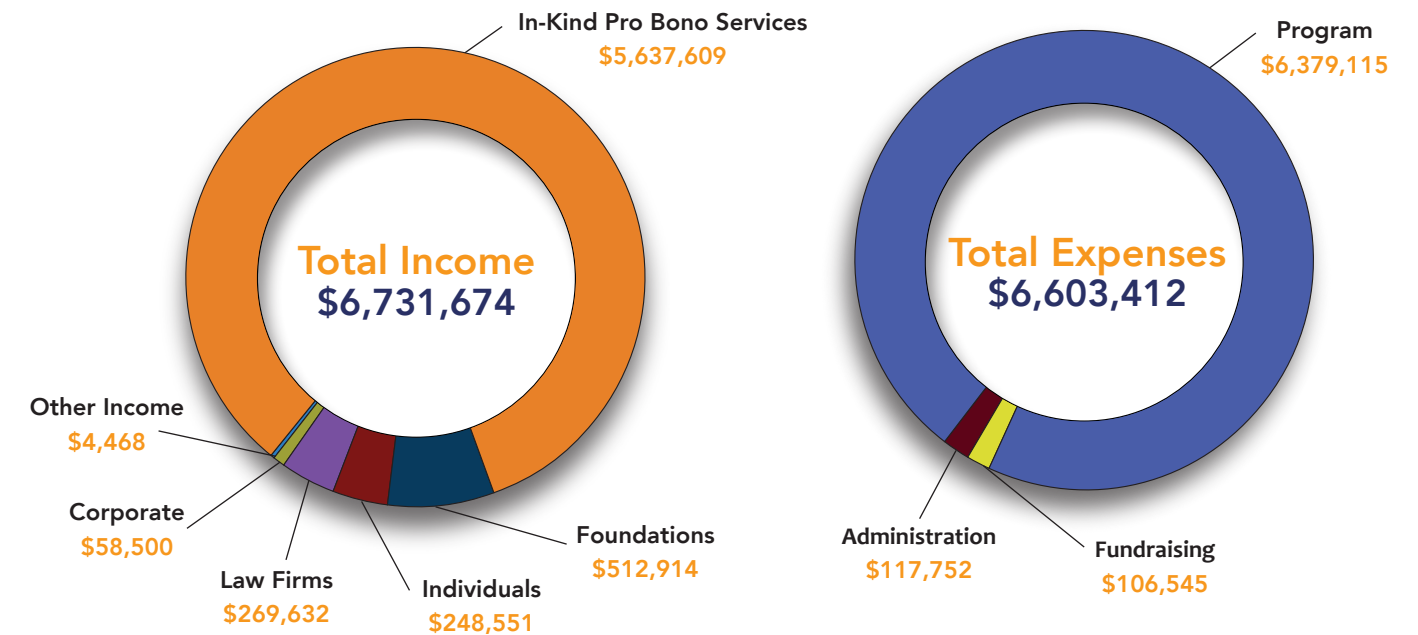
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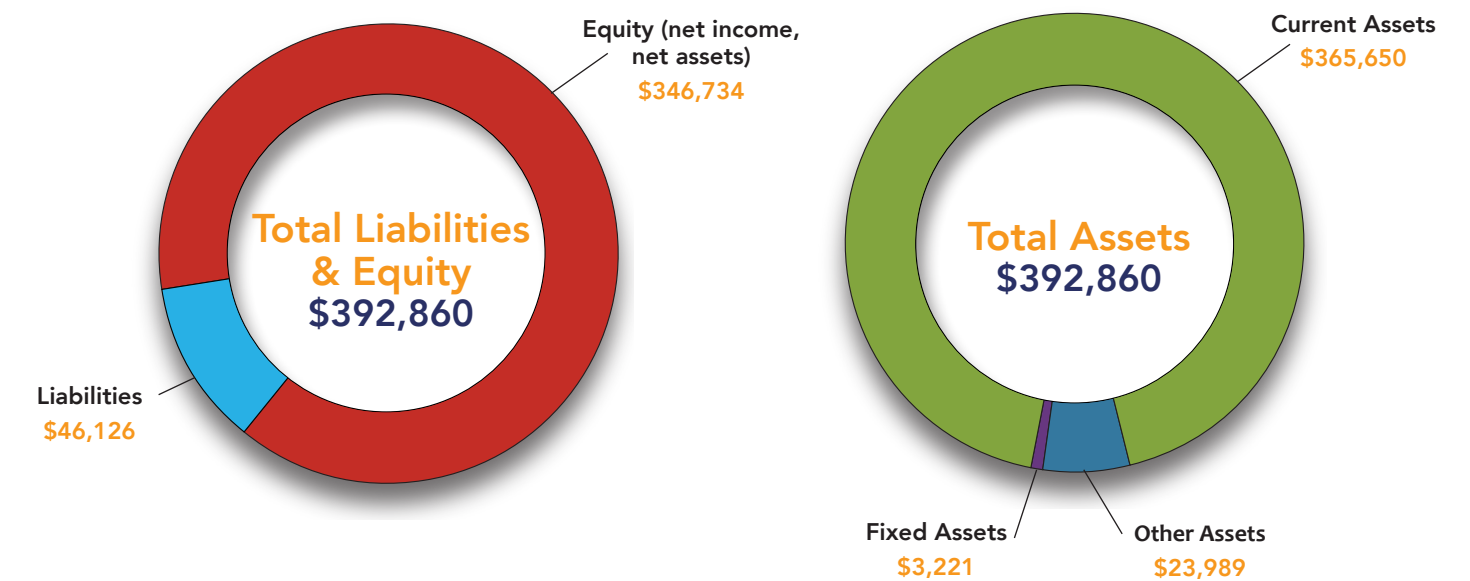
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PROFIT & LOSS



BALANCE SHEET



For the most updated financial information, visit nlchp.org or view our financial and accountability ratings at Charity Navigator and GuideStar.

WAYS TO SUPPORT THE LAW CENTER

The Law Center shares our 2019 achievements with our generous supporters. Please consider ways you can support our work to end homelessness:





- **Donate:** The Law Center relies on the support of private institutions and individuals across the country. We do not receive government funding. Gifts of any amount make a difference in our work — and every dollar allows us to leverage donated legal support, multiplying your gift many times over. <https://nlchp.org/donate/>.
- **Law Firm and Corporate Giving:** Our partner law firms and corporate legal departments are as committed as the Law Center to ending homelessness. If you know of or are affiliated with a law firm or corporation that you think would like to explore partnering opportunities, please contact us.
- **Planned Giving:** Contact us for more information about how you can ensure the future of the Law Center's work by including the Law Center in your will or other estate plan. Please consider making a monthly gift to help provide a stable foundation throughout the year..

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

- Government employees can give through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #11947).
- Shop online through AmazonSmile and list the Law Center as a beneficiary of a percentage of your purchases.
- Launch a personal fundraiser through Facebook Causes and raise money from your friends and family.

CONNECT WITH THE LAW CENTER

- In Just Times, The Law Center's monthly e-newsletter, provides updates on our current issues and news.
- Follow the Law Center on social media for regular updates on our work:

-  facebook.com/homelessnesslaw
-  twitter.com/nlchphomeless
-  instagram.com/nlchplaw
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Our vision is for an end to homelessness
in America. A home for every family and
individual will be a reality, not just a goal
— *a right and not a privilege.*



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