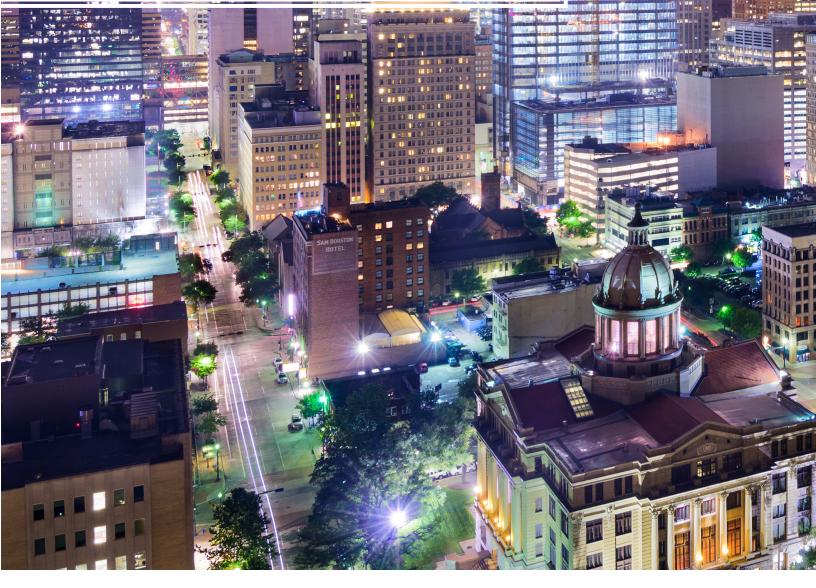
# 2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW





A SERVICE OF THE HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION

## A MESSAGE FROM THE 2021-2022 CHAIR



During the last year, as our world began to adjust to the changing phases of the pandemic, HVL saw that the need for legal assistance among our neighbors was growing. It became apparent that increasing the engagement of pro bono attorneys to pre-pandemic levels was critical to the vibrancy of our community and the fairness of our legal system. Therefore, I set a Board goal of increasing pro bono engagement during my term as 2021-2022 Chair of the Houston Volunteer Lawyers.

Our first action item was to create an ad hoc committee on pro bono engagement. A major success from this focus was the implementation of the "Wipe Out the Waitlist" campaign (affectionately known as the WOW campaign) to coincide with Pro Bono Week in October. In September and October, HVL harnessed collective pro bono energy and encouraged colleagues across the region to provide pro bono representation to more than 225 clients. As October came

to an end, fewer than 10 clients were waiting on pro bono representation. The WOW campaign was a huge success!

Knowing that new clients come to HVL every day, we repeated the campaign in the Spring. Going forward, I challenge the Board to continue to find innovative ways to encourage pro bono volunteerism.

Another action implemented this year was a greater use of social media to recruit pro bono attorneys, encourage our volunteers to "signal boost" to amplify the great work of HVL, and to show appreciation to all the firms and individual attorneys who give their time and expertise to pro bono work. Using social media, the HVL Board acknowledged each of the firms that became Equal Access to Justice Champions.

Social media was also very helpful in recruiting attorneys to be a part of the Eviction Defense Attorney Project as our community continues to deal with pandemic-related evictions. The fast-paced legal process with evictions requires pro bono attorneys to be available with short notice to represent tenants and help to level the playing field during the eviction appellate process. I encourage all attorneys to continue to support this project as evictions in Harris County are growing every month.

A final accomplishment this year was the creation of a short video that is being used for pro bono recruitment. Click <u>here</u> to hear some of our colleagues talk about why doing pro bono work is critical for the client and incredibly rewarding.

As I conclude my term as Chair of the Board of Directors for Houston Volunteer Lawyers, I am proud of the work that we accomplished during the year. Our work is never really done. Low-income clients facing civil legal issues will always need pro bono assistance as we strive to achieve equal access to justice for all.

Keri D. Brown Board Chair, 2021-2022 Houston Volunteer Lawyers

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



What a year the 2021-2022 Board year was. A devastating pandemic and global and domestic unrest continued to rock our community. Our community saw rising rents, rising incidents of violence and intimate partner deaths, and an increase in requests for family law and eviction defense assistance. Over 10,000 individuals reached out to Houston Volunteer Lawyers for help. Houston Volunteer Lawyers responded to these challenges by doing what we do best.

We inspired, empowered, and supported attorneys to give their time and expertise to advance the rights and well-being of individuals. Attorneys from over 100 corporate legal departments and law firms leaned-in to provide free representation to individuals who would not otherwise have been able to obtain the help of an attorney. Our 70 Equal Access to Justice Champions stepped-up, finding the resources to collectively provide pro bono help to more

individuals than the group pledged to assist.

I am very proud of all that we accomplished together. As the largest provider of pro bono services in Texas, we leveraged the collective power and resources of our pro bono community to advocate for thousands of clients during the time of greatest needs. During the Bar year, we represented tenants in their evictions cases. We helped individuals obtain custody of their children. We helped family members obtain guardianship to care for a loved one. We helped juveniles seal their records. We helped veterans access benefits long overdue. And when finding a pro bono attorney to represent a client in court was not feasible, we made sure that the client understood their rights and legal options. During the Bar year over 3,000 individuals were served virtually by volunteers who provided one-on-one tailored advice to clients nearly every Friday. This last year was an innovative, fast-paced year. By visiting our updated website <u>www.makejusticehappen.org</u> you will see the new tools that HVL created to communicate with clients more effectively and to make it easier for volunteers to help.

It has been an impactful year. With every improvement made, one more need appears. Houston Volunteer Lawyers staff and pro bono attorneys will continue to be clientcentered and responsive to community needs. Thank you to each pro bono attorney and legal professional who helped one or more pro bono clients in 2021-2022. I look forward to continuing to work with you to promote equal access to justice for all.

Anne Chandler Executive Director Houston Volunteer Lawyers

## 2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Chair** Keri D. Brown

**Chair-Elect** David E. Harrell Jr.

**Treasurer** Greg Moore

Secretary Tony Visage

Immediate Past Chair Chris Popov

**Directors, Term 2021-2023** Collin Cox Jacqueline Furlow Chanler Langham Audrey Momanaee Terry Roberson Tramaine Chargois Singleton

## Directors, Term 2020-2022

Emma Doineau Jamie Leader Peter Lowry Cassandra McGarvey Aaron Reimer Andrew Yeh

Directors, Term 2021-2022

Hon. Jerry Simoneaux

## **EX-OFFICIO**

Houston Bar Association President Jennifer Hasley

Houston Bar Foundation Chair Polly Fohn

Houston Young Lawyers Association Kelly Hanen

Houston Bar Association Mindy Davidson

## HOUSTON VOLUNTEER LAWYERS STAFF

Anne Chandler Executive Director

## **STAFF ATTORNEYS**

Barbara "Bobbie" Cochran Staff Attorney

Maricarmen Dollar Supervising Attorney

Leesa Everitt Staff Attorney

Joyce Helfman Managing Attorney

Brittany Irving Staff Attorney

Andrew Lehmann Supervising Attorney

Luz Martinez Staff Attorney and Data Analyst

Blenda Ruiz Staff Attorney

Stephanie Sommerlatte Supervising Attorney

Henry Sturm Hunton Andrews Kurth Fellow

Michelle Tewal Staff Attorney

Elizabeth Tran Legal Services Director

Barbara Urdiales Staff Attorney

#### **PRO BONO DEPARTMENT**

Brittany Krohn Pro Bono Coordinator

Ellie Jaime Assistant Pro Bono Coordinator

#### LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Yamilex Aguirre Case Worker

Angeles Calderon Intake Manager

**Deon Hunter** Program Assistant

Jacqueline Lopez Case Worker

Gabrielle McKeller Program Coordinator

Kenia Montano Program Coordinator

Max Murdoch Program Coordinator

Leilani Ortiz Program Coordinator

Mary Puente Receptionist

Natalia Reyes Lead Program Coordinator

Amanda Vasquez Case Worker

#### ADMINISTRATION

Marilyn Brown Director of Grants & Special Projects

Yaroslav Diaz IT Junior Administrator

Thao Dong Staff Accountant

Sarah Kole Finance and Operations Director

HVL...connect

HVL advances its mission by connecting those in need of legal assistance with volunteer lawyers.

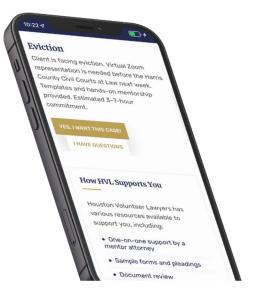
HVL believes in the exponential reach of delivering free legal services through pro bono attorneys. HVL staff identifies clients who cannot

obtain legal assistance through the private bar or other community legal organizations. Each staff attorney works alongside dozens of pro bono attorneys to help clients understand their legal options and access critical legal protections. The power of the Bar makes our civil justice system fairer and more equitable for all.

#### Pro Bono Attorneys Can Now Take a Case with a "Click"

The HVL website – <u>www.makejusticehappen.org</u> – was redesigned to permit pro bono attorneys to locate a client matter appropriate for the attorney's interests and availability. Pro bono attorneys now check our website frequently as the number of Neighbors in Need of civil legal assistance grows each day.





One challenge brought on by the pandemic was restricted access to the physical spaces where our pro bono attorneys provided free legal services to veterans. For over a decade pro bono attorneys served thousands of veterans at the DeBakey VA Medical Center. With Debakey VA Medical Center closed to community partners, Houston Volunteer Lawyers found alternative ways to reach veterans. A veterans clinic was held at the Lone Star Flight Museum in February 2022, and outreach events were hosted at DeGeorge at Union Station, US Vets Midtown Terrace, Harris County Veterans Courts, and Combined Arms.



HVL...connects

## The Will-A-Thon is back!

As restrictions on social distancing were lifted, the popular Will-A-Thon returned this year. There were many clients eager to execute their wills and other estate planning documents. The Houston Bar Association's Elder Law Committee came to the rescue. Through many small events and a large spring Will-A-Thon, a total of 227 wills and estate planning cases were closed in the 2021-2022 Bar year. We look forward to continuing to work with our pro bono attorneys to serve clients through the Will-A-Thon.



## HVL...inspires

HVL advances its mission by inspiring, supporting, and empowering lawyers to volunteer their services.

Houston Volunteer Lawyers' pro bono attorneys provide legal services to clients on a wide range of legal issues. HVL staff attorneys provide mentorship, working closely with volunteers to develop a legal strategy and the tools needed to overcome barriers that naturally arise during the lifespan of a case. On behalf of the thousands of clients who benefit from our pro bono attorneys' devotion every year, HVL's Board of Directors and staff extend our incredible thanks. Collectively you helped thousands of clients understand their legal options and move forward in resolving their civil legal issues.

## **Pro Bono Attorneys are Honored**

Every attorney who helps a client is greatly appreciated. This year, several went above and beyond and were recognized for their efforts.



## Wipeout the Waitlist Campaign

The brainchild of the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Board Chair, Keri D. Brown, the "Wipeout the Waitlist" campaign was an ingenious way to introduce friendly firm-to-firm competitiveness to recruit volunteer attorneys to represent more than 225 clients in a short period of time. Every Board member of HVL stepped up and committed themselves and their firms to do an extra push in September and October so that by the end of October, HVL had almost no clients waiting to have their case accepted by a volunteer. Board Chair Keri Brown led the charge and her firm, Baker Botts LLP, took the highest number of cases for representation during the campaign.

HVL...inspires

#### **Pro Bono Recruitment Video**

HVL produced a pro bono recruitment video this year. We invite you to click <u>here</u> to hear the message of why attorneys feel that taking pro bono cases is the *"right thing to do"* and why doing so may *"energize you to be a better lawyer."* 

## Evictions – Meeting an Overwhelming Challenge

Evictions continued to rise and HVL's commitment to provide legal



representation to those tenants who appeal their JP Court decision to one of the four Harris County Civil Courts at Law increased. The initial four law firms that pledged to represent tenants in their eviction appeals with only short-term notice grew to sixteen firms. We thank each one! Collectively, we served 880 clients and receive new requests from tenants for legal assistance each week.

Arnold & Porter Baker Botts Blank Rome Bush Seyferth Gibson Dunn Hunton Andrews Kurth Locke Lord McGuireWoods Morgan Lewis Norton, Rose and Fulbright O'Melveny Pillsbury Reed Smith Vinson & Elkins Willkie Farr & Gallagher Yetter Coleman

#### **Continuing Legal Education**

Pro bono assistance gives attorneys an opportunity to expose themselves to an unfamiliar practice area. Houston Volunteer Lawyers helps to inspire more attorneys to step out of their comfort zone to help thousands of individuals in our community. During the Bar year many attorneys attended CLEs that equipped them to better understand the basics of assisting a client. The price of admission to attend each CLE is the promise to accept a pro bono case.

CLEs on guardianship, evictions, juvenile sealing, criminal expungement, wills, and family law were offered in 2021-2022. With the CLE training and a staff attorney as mentor, pro bono attorneys stand ready to promote equal access to justice by volunteering to provide legal assistance to an HVL client.

HVL...partners

HVL works in the community through strategic partnerships to provide legal information, education, and support

Just as HVL's capacity to serve more clients expands through the pro bono model, our ability to reach more clients is growing. HVL depends on strategic partnerships throughout Harris County and the seven contiguous counties to broaden our reach to help more individuals. In 2021-2022, HVL strengthened existing partnerships and created new partnerships in our effort to make legal assistance available to all eligible individuals who need it.

## **Eviction Defense Coalition**

The Eviction Defense Coalition, composed of Houston Volunteer Lawyers, Lone Star Legal Aid, Earl Carl Institute at Texas Southern University, South Texas College of Law Houston, and the University of Houston Law Center, continued to work collaboratively to provide access to free legal assistance for the growing number of tenants facing eviction in Harris County. As federal money for rental assistance and legal aid was depleted, the Harris County Commissioners' Court contributed a million dollars so that low-income tenants could obtain legal help on their evictions. Depending on where the tenant lived and in which court the case was being heard, clients were seamlessly assigned to the Eviction Defense Coalition partner best equipped to provide legal assistance.

According to January Advisors, more than 60,000 eviction cases were held in the JP Courts between 7/1/2021 and 6/30/2022. Houston Volunteer Lawyers committed to providing pro bono representation to those who appeal their JP Court decision to one of the four Harris County Civil Courts at Law. 880 clients were served by Houston Volunteer Lawyers and our pro bono attorneys. As rents increase in our region, the need for more attorney participation to assist with evictions will grow.



## **Stronger Together**

Jennifer Hasley, the 2021-2022 Houston Bar Association President set STRONGER TOGETHER as her unifying theme for the year. The partnership between the HBA and HVL is certainly an example of how that theme looks in action. HVL serves as the pro bono arm of the HBA and the number of clients that can be helped each year is a direct



result of the number of HBA members who say yes to pro bono work. HVL documented \$8,721,724 in donated pro bono services as reported in the HVL 2021 audit report. This value of donated services increases HVL's budget by almost three times; for every dollar received by HVL, \$3 of donated services are recorded. We truly are STRONGER TOGETHER!

HVL...partners

## Legal Woes Negatively Impact Individuals' Health

Houston Volunteer Lawyers is an active member of the Texas Medical-Legal Partnership Coalition with staff attorney, Stephanie Sommerlatte, serving on the Coalition's Board of Directors. The mission of the Texas Medical-Legal Partnership is to improve the health of all Texans by supporting and promoting collaboration between legal and health professionals to address the structural problems that underlie health inequities and contribute to health-harming legal needs.

Houston Volunteer Lawyers and Texas Children's Hospital created the first medical legal partnership in Texas in 2012. Financially eligible patients at Texas Children's Hospital are offered pro bono legal assistance with all civil legal matters they may face. The most prevalent need is the creation of guardianship for children who are unable to make medical decisions for themselves as they turn 18. Without a guardianship in place, parents lose the right to provide decision-making for their child when the child becomes an adult, leaving the state to be the decision-maker for the disabled patient.

In the 2021-2022 Bar year, 279 families were given peace of mind as a parent or other adult was appointed to serve as a guardian over a disabled child who turned 18. To help with a guardianship matter, HVL volunteer attorneys take on the additional hurdle of completing a 4-hour Certification CLE to comply with Texas' certification requirements. HVL is grateful to over 200 attorneys who helped these families achieve a lifetime of better medical care for the disabled young adults in their family.

HVL and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center recommitted to work together to identify veterans who seek medical care at the VA who may also have legal needs. Once this partnership can return to its pre-pandemic level, up to 100 veterans per month will be helped.

HVL expanded its medical-legal partnerships this year. A medical-legal partnership was piloted with AccessHealth, a federally qualified health center serving patients in Fort Bend County. Most of the patients at AccessHealth are low-income and many have civil legal issues that impact their well-being and health. AccessHealth investigated the health implications of civil legal needs on their patients. Using the data from this pilot project, AccessHealth received additional funds to decrease the negative health implications exacerbated by unmet legal needs.



## Law Students/Interns

During the Bar year, fifteen interns and fellows brought a new energy to the HVL office. They provided much needed resources as the need for pro bono legal services continues to grow. Intern positions were made available to 2nd and 3rd year law students. Thanks goes to the three local law schools and Rice University for encouraging their students to experience a commitment to pro bono service at this early stage in their careers.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE 2021-2022 HOUSTON BAR FOUNDATION CHAIR



Serving as the Chair of the Houston Bar Foundation during this past year was an honor and privilege. The Houston Bar Association and Houston Bar Foundation's annual Harvest Celebration, benefiting Houston Volunteer Lawyers, was once again held in person with over 1,100 people in attendance. The enthusiasm to support Houston Volunteer Lawyers' pro bono legal services was palpable throughout the evening and the event broke previous fundraising records. The 2021 Harvest Celebration went into the books as a smashing success!

In tandem with the Harvest Celebration, the HBF and HBA launched a five-week Peer-to-Peer Campaign, challenging Houston's legal community to donate \$40 or more to HVL, take on a pro bono case, or assist Houston Volunteer Lawyers' mission for access to justice in other ways. The campaign ended with National Pro Bono Week at the end of October.

Also returning this year was the HBF's Annual Luncheon in February, providing a second opportunity for hundreds of HBF members to gather and recognize outstanding attorneys, law firms, and corporate counsel whose pro bono efforts went above and beyond to help our neighbors. Click <u>here</u> to read more about the honorees.

These events are just two reminders of how the Houston Bar Foundation supports Houston Volunteer Lawyers. I am thrilled that during my term we broadened our reach so that additional law firms, corporate legal departments, and solo practitioners have a way to give back to our community and bridge the legal gap to Houstonians in need.

I thank each one of you for your support of Houston Volunteer Lawyers through the Houston Bar Foundation.

Polly Fohn Chair, 2021-2022 Houston Bar Foundation

## A MESSAGE FROM THE 2021-2022 HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT



STRONGER TOGETHER. This phrase served as the theme for the Houston Bar Association during my term as 2021-2022 President. The Houston Bar Association and its 10,000-plus members work together to carry out the mission of the HBA, provide legal services through the HBA's ancillary organizations, and foster the already cordial bench-bar relationship. Our family of legal service organizations, Houston Volunteer Lawyers, Houston Lawyer Referral Service, and the Dispute Resolution Center, provides opportunities for members of our legal community to deliver a wide range of needed legal services which includes free legal assistance to eligible clients, mediation, and referrals to private attorneys. During the 2021-2022 bar year, we relied on tried-andtrue methods and developed new ways, such as incorporating technology and virtual interfaces, to build a stronger community of support for vulnerable individuals including women, those with disabilities, and our veterans.

As one of my focus areas for the bar year was to expand our military and veterans programs, we created the HBA Military and Veterans Committee. This new committee gives those who served our country and those who support our veterans a unique opportunity to lead, network, and serve. The committee members work together and with our ancillary organizations to help active service members, veterans, military spouses, and surviving spouses, in many critical ways, including providing legal assistance to meet their civil legal needs.

Celebrating HBA members while promoting professionalism and pro bono service are perpetual objectives and remained a focus during the bar year. It is through the generous support of HBA members, affiliated law firms, and corporate legal departments, who dedicate their time, talents, and "treasure" that Houston Volunteer Lawyers can serve thousands of eligible clients each year. More than 1,100 people attended the 2021 Harvest Celebration, the HBA's premier fall networking event that also serves as the major fundraiser for the Houston Bar Foundation with 100% of the net proceeds used to support the pro bono legal services provided by HVL. Additionally, to inspire HBA members to volunteer through HVL, a Peer-to-Peer Campaign was launched in conjunction with the 2021 Harvest Celebration. One element of the campaign was to "Wipe Out the Waitlist" which placed hundreds of clients with pro bono counsel and brought HVL's list of those cases waiting to be placed with pro bono volunteers to an unprecedented single-digit level.

Even so, the justice gap continues to grow. Every HBA member can make a difference in closing the gap and ensuring access to justice today and for years to come. I leave office with a gratitude and appreciation for our members, optimism for the future, and an even stronger belief in what we can achieve together. We are and remain STRONGER TOGETHER.

Jennifer Hasley President, 2021-2022 Houston Bar Association

## **EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE CHAMPIONS**

To be recognized as an Equal Access to Justice Champion, law firms, corporate legal departments, and solo practitioners agree to take one pro bono case per year for every five attorneys in their Houston office. During the 2021-2022 Bar year, several participating Champions doubled, tripled, and even delivered tenfold on their pledges resulting in the Equal Access to Justice Champions ending the year at 129% of goal. HVL thanks each of the seventy Equal Access to Justice Champions listed here.

#### CORPORATE LEGAL DEPARTMENTS

CenterPoint Energy, Inc. Chevron U.S.A. Inc. Exxon Mobil Corporation Halliburton Energy LyondellBasell Industries Marathon Oil Company Shell Oil Company

#### LARGE LAW FIRMS

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP Baker Botts L.L.P. BakerHostetler LLP Blank Rome LLP Bracewell LLP Chamberlain Hrdlicka Dentons US LLP Evershed Sutherland US LLP Foley Lardner Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP Gray Reed Greenberg Traurig, LLP Haynes and Boone, LLP Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP Jackson Walker LLP Kean Miller LLP King & Spalding LLP Kirkland & Ellis LLP Locke Lord LLP Morgan Lewis Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Śmoak & Stewart, PC ReedSmith LLP Sidley Austin Squire Patton Boggs Vinson & Elkins LLP Winstead PC Winston & Strawn LLP Yetter Coleman LLP

#### **MID-SIZE LAW FIRMS**

McDowell & Hetherington LLP

#### **BOUTIQUE LAW FIRMS**

Beck Redden LLP Gibbs & Bruns LLP KoonsFuller, P.C. Royston Razor Weycer, Kaplan, Pulaski & Zuber, P.C. Wilson, Cribbs, & Goren, P.C.

#### SMALL LAW FIRMS

Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Agosto, Aziz & Stogner Coane & Associates Givens & Johnston Jenkins & Kamin, LLP Rapp & Krock, PC Shipley Snell Montgomery LLP Sorrels Law

## SOLO LAW FIRMS AND PRACTITIONERS

Angela Solice, Attorney at Law David Hsu and Associates Diane C. Treich, Attorney at Law Fleurinord Law PLLC Frye and Benavidez, PLLC Fugua & Associates, PC Hasley Scarano L.L.P. Law Firm of Min Gyu Kim PLLC Law Office of Cindi L. Rickman Law Office of Norma Levine Trusch Law Office of Robert E. Price Martin R.G. Marasigan Law Offices McGarvey PLLC Medina Law Texas, PLLC Sanchez Law Firm Shortt & Nguyen, P.C. The Ericksen Law Firm The Jurek Law Group, PLLC The LaFitte Law Group, PLLC Travis Bryan Law Group, PLLC

## SUPPORTERS ·

HVL is incredibly grateful to these funders that provided \$5,000 or more in financial support to fund HVL's work in 2021.

## **NON-GOVERNMENT**

American Bar Association, Military and Veterans Legal Center

Chevron

King & Spalding

Legal Services Corporation Funds subgrant by Lone Star Legal Aid

Texas Access to Justice Foundation – Basic Civil Legal Services

Texas Access to Justice Foundation – Legal Aid to Veterans

Texas Access to Justice Foundation Emergency Rental Program

Texas Children's Hospital, Medical Legal Partnership

United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County

Houston Bar Foundation

The Harvest Celebration hosted annually by the Houston Bar Association and Houston Bar Foundation raises funds to support HVL. We thank the many law firms and corporations who provide financial support to HVL through the Harvest Celebration.

## **GOVERNMENT**

City of Houston, Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS.

Internal Revenue Service, Low Income Taxpayer Clinic

Texas Veteran Commission, Fund for Veterans' Assistance

## **IN-KIND**

Alvarez & Marsal

Hunton Andrews Kurth

Pro Bono

HVL appreciates the hundreds of area attorneys and non-attorneys who donate their time, expertise, and experience to provide equal justice to all. Pro Bono legal services were valued at more than \$8 million in 2021.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

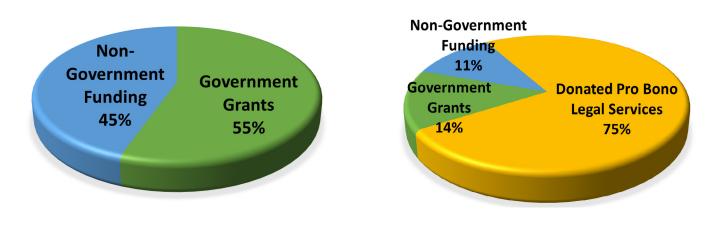
The financial review is from the latest audited financial statements covering the period of January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. <u>View the full audit</u>.

## Total Revenue = \$2,989,601

(Without value of pro bono services included)

## Total Revenue = \$11,711,325

(With value of pro bono services included)



Houston Volunteer Lawyers operates using a pro bono model. We appreciate all the attorneys who take the time to report their pro bono hours to HVL.

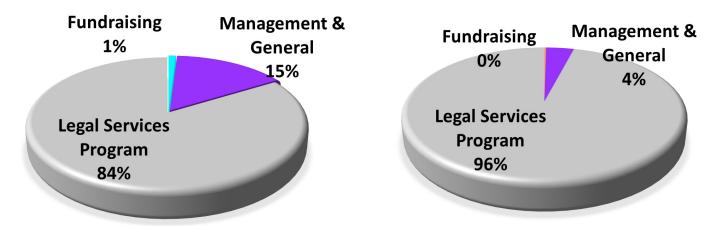
In 2021, more than \$8 million of donated services were documented.

## Total Expenses = \$ 2,920,438

(Without value of pro bono services included)

## Total Expenses = \$11,642,162

(With value of pro bono services included)



When the value of pro bono services is included as a cost, 96% of expenses are used to deliver legal services.



## A SERVICE OF THE HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION

Houston Volunteer Lawyers 1111 Bagby Street, FLB 300 Houston, TX 77002

713.228.0735 www.makejusticehappen.org