



Pine Tree Legal Assistance • 2022 Annual Report

*On the path to justice*



## *In this report*

Mainers are famous for saying “you can’t get there from here!” For our clients, the civil justice system can feel that way because it can be so difficult to navigate.

Thanks to the funding you provide, we have a team of incredible advocates working at Pine Tree Legal Assistance and hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and skills. Together, we help THOUSANDS of Mainers on their path to justice.

We created this report to thank you for your support and report back to you on how we’ve used the funds you’ve invested. In the following pages, you’ll find:

- A thank you note from our Executive Director
- Our areas of expertise
- Highlights from 2022
- Meet our staff
- A survivor’s path to justice
- Data and a story about evictions in Maine
- Thank you to our donors
- A tribute to our volunteers
- 2022 Revenue & Expenses

# Thank you!

After more than two decades working for justice and equity, my path led me home to Maine, where I joined Pine Tree Legal Assistance as the new Executive Director in September 2022.

The path to justice for Mainers is incredibly challenging right now, and Pine Tree must continue to be strong and accessible for all. The demand in our clients' communities for civil legal assistance is at its highest level ever. In 2022, the ongoing pandemic, the housing crisis, and rising inflation resulted in an extraordinarily difficult year for many Mainers.

Despite the great and growing need for our services, I am inspired by the impact our advocacy has, together with our clients' brave participation in the justice system. Last year, we obtained more than \$3 million in income, benefits and savings for our clients, while preserving their housing stability, safety, and more all across the state.

From Allagash to York, we are here for Mainers, thanks to your support. Thank you for joining us on Maine's path to justice.



Tom Fritzsche  
Executive Director



# We *can* get you there from here

Our programs are numerous and expansive and designed to meet the diverse needs of Mainers while making the most of our resources. Our areas of expertise include:

- Rental Housing
- Consumer Law
- Public Benefits
- Family Law and Victim Rights
- Children's Rights
- Fair Housing
- Farmworker Rights
- Foreclosure Prevention
- Indigenous Peoples Rights and Tribal Law
- Tax Law
- Veterans Rights



# on our path to justice





# We ♥ our staff

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## who lead the way



"I fight for justice for all and help give voice to the voiceless."

*Rebecca Horton*

Family Law & Victim Rights Attorney



"This is the way that I am best able to help people. Socioeconomic disparities are the root of so many problems and Pine Tree Legal's work reverses those disparities. "

*Chris Hill*

Eviction Prevention Attorney



"Lawyers have incredible influence over how accessible justice is in the legal system. I wanted to work to expand, not limit justice. There is no justice, unless everyone has access to it."

*Maureen Boston*

Director of Intake



"I have always chosen jobs that I feel make a positive difference in the world."

*Mary Murphy*

Pro Bono Unit Paralegal



## *Celia's path to justice*

On a cold December night, Celia was assaulted and locked out of her house by her boyfriend. She was eight-months pregnant at the time. Celia experienced a great deal of pain following this assault, and noticed the baby wasn't moving as much as she typically did. When her daughter was born, she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and a heart condition that made her medically fragile.

Celia ended the relationship and began raising her daughter, with almost no involvement from her ex.

A few years later, Celia wanted to take steps to ensure safety and stability for her and her daughter. She filed a Parental Rights and Responsibilities case in the Bridgton District Court. Because of her ex's history of abuse toward Celia and a record of abuse toward his other children, Celia wanted to protect her daughter. She also wanted to ensure her ex contributed financially to support their daughter.

Unable to navigate the complex court process on her own, an advocate with Through These Doors, the local domestic violence agency, referred her to Pine Tree Legal Assistance.

Maris Hubbard, an attorney with Pine Tree Legal Assistance's Family Law Victim Rights Unit, represented Celia in her case.



Celia's ex was uncooperative throughout the process and created significant barriers along the way. He tried to terminate his parental rights in an effort to avoid child support. When that didn't work, he failed to submit updated financial information as required by the court. He also failed to attend the final hearing.

Attorney Hubbard was creative and zealous in her advocacy of Celia and her daughter. After the final hearing, the Magistrate awarded Celia sole Parental Rights and Responsibilities, granted Celia's request to change their daughter's last name to match her own, established an ongoing child support order, and ordered her ex to pay more than \$17,000 in child support arrears.

Since finalizing the order, Celia and her daughter have moved out of her mom's house and into their own apartment. Celia is studying to become an EMT and pursuing her passion for photography. Her daughter is walking and talking!

Pine Tree Legal Assistance is part of a coordinated community response in Maine communities to end domestic and sexual violence.

Civil legal aid is an important intervention that lessens immediate and long-term harm. Research shows that access to civil legal aid improves the likelihood that victims will be able to obtain protective orders from courts, which is a significant factor in reducing rates of domestic violence. Additionally, this work mitigates adverse childhood experiences by reducing and eliminating a child's exposure to traumatic events related to domestic violence and child sexual assault.





# The path leads home

**Eviction has a devastating impact on families.** Maine is experiencing an eviction crisis. In 2022, eviction filings in Maine rose 27%.

Landlords have greater access to legal representation than tenants. Landlords have the benefit of a lawyer in about 80% of cases versus 20% for tenants. This imbalance tips the scales to favor landlords.

**Legal representation results in better outcomes for tenants.** Tenants with an attorney were 85% more likely to avoid an eviction judgment than those who lacked representation.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance is the primary litigation law firm for eviction defense in Maine. More than 80% of tenants who had a lawyer in eviction proceedings were represented by us.

We know eviction legal defense is an effective, evidenced-based approach to improving housing stability. **Your support makes it happen.**

Sources: Maine Judicial Branch and a 2021 report by the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC) that analyzed data on eviction actions in the seven busiest eviction courts in Maine: Lewiston, Portland, Bangor, Biddeford, Augusta, Waterville and Springvale.



# for Skyla

For Skyla, having safe and affordable housing for her young children is her number one priority. Skyla had been unhoused before and now relied on a housing subsidy to maintain housing stability.

Less than a year after moving into her new home, Skyla received a notice from her property management company informing her that due to a computer error, she was mistakenly given non-subsidized housing and, that she would have to begin paying a higher amount of rent.

Unable to afford the higher rent amount, Skyla was worried about losing her home.

Skyla and her case manager reached out to Pine Tree Legal Assistance to see if anything could be done. Katy Childs, an attorney in Pine Tree Legal Assistance's Augusta Office walked Skyla and her case manager through the steps to request a hearing to challenge this decision and Attorney Childs helped her draft a letter asserting her contractual and constitutional rights to her housing subsidy.

Within a few weeks, Skyla's case manager reached out to let us know that a subsidized unit became available and now Skyla has a subsidy attached to the apartment where she is living. She is once again able to ensure safe and affordable housing for her children.



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"Pine Tree Legal Assistance takes a holistic approach, and if a client has a legal problem, they want to solve it. If they are not familiar with an area, they either educate themselves or look for someone with experience in the issue. That is because they care about the client, which is why they do this work."

*Dan Emery*  
President, Board of Directors



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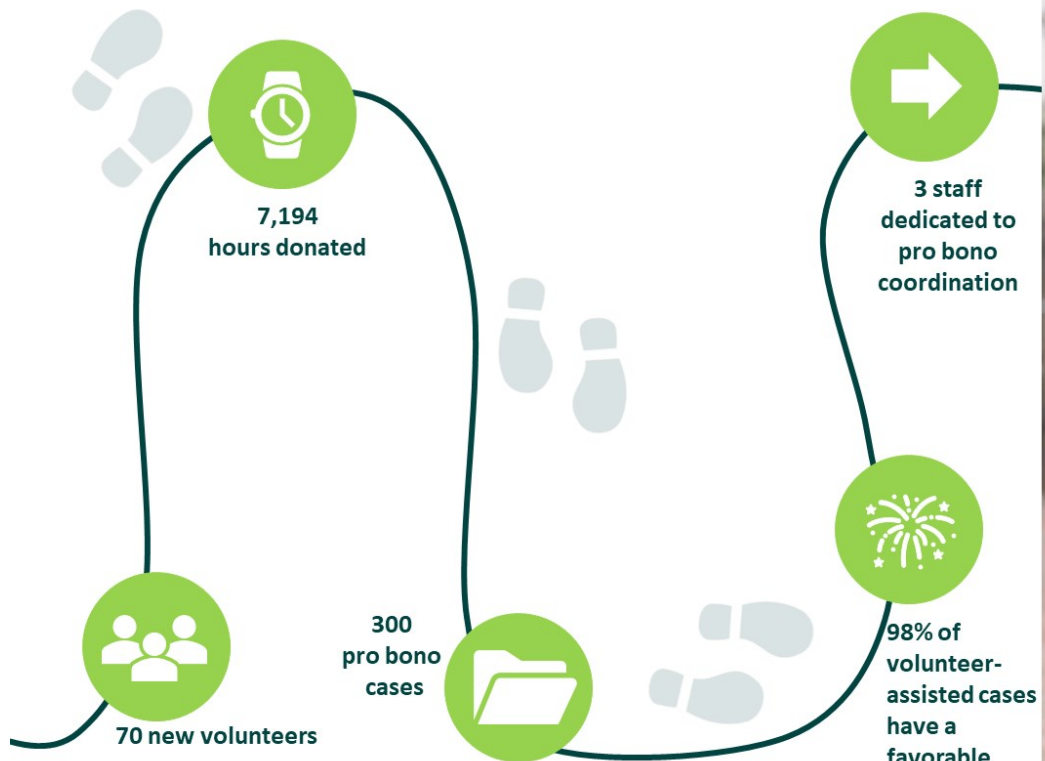
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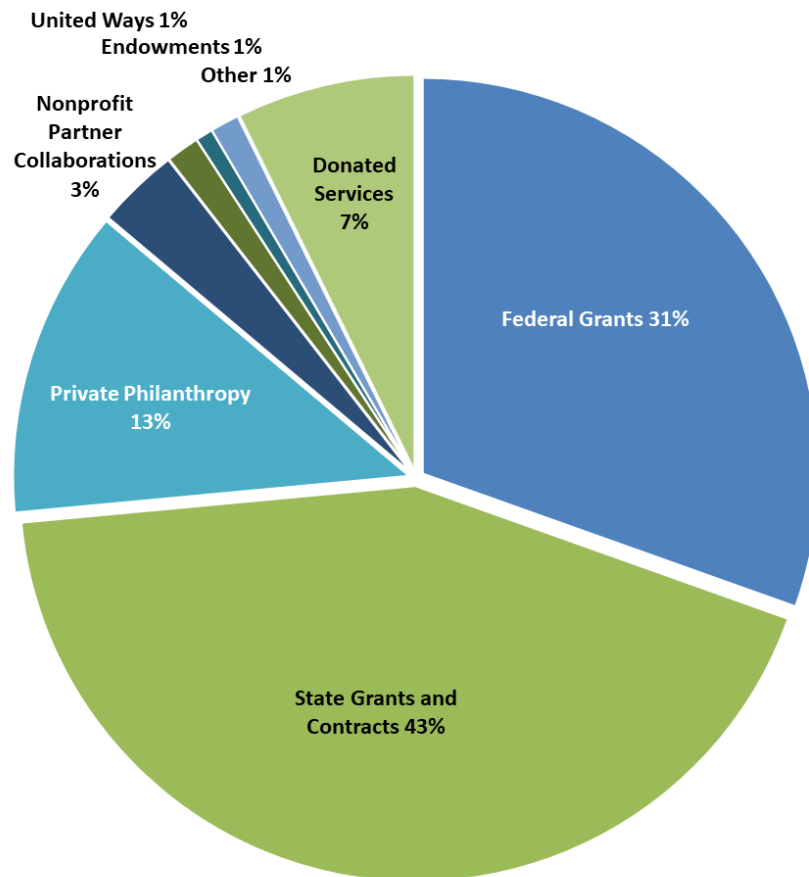
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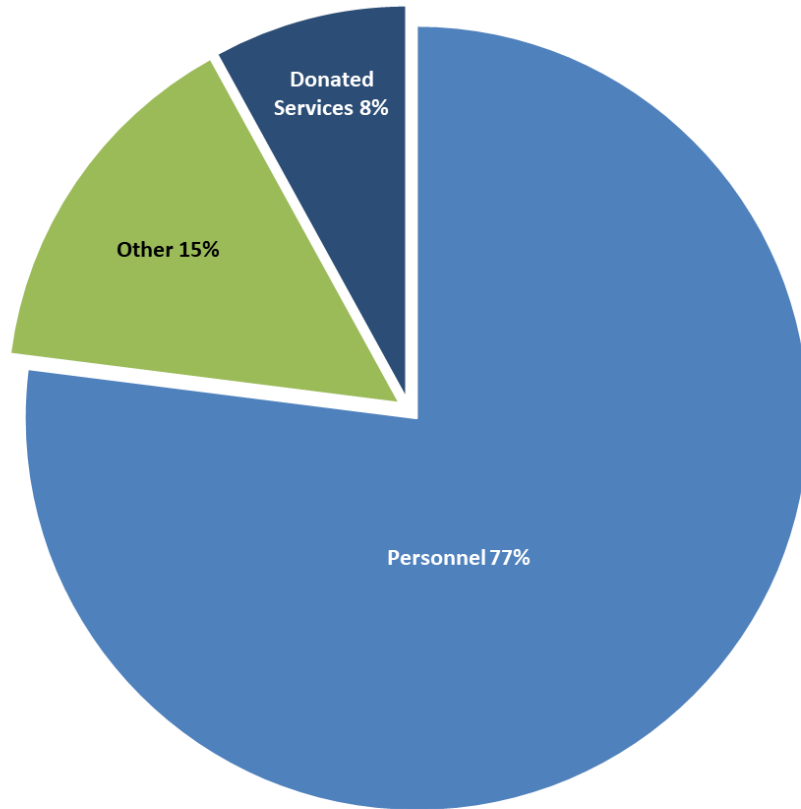






## 2022 Revenue

Federal Grants	\$2,849,878
State Grants and Contracts	\$4,031,656
Private Philanthropy	\$1,181,069
Nonprofit Partner Collaborations	\$314,059
United Ways	\$125,924
Endowments	\$65,280
Other	\$109,164
Donated Services	\$682,915
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$9,359,945</b>



## 2022 Expenses

Personnel	\$6,738,089
Occupancy	\$298,328
Supplies and Equipment	\$201,125
Travel and Training	\$134,915
Fundraising	\$11,486
Sub-grants	\$61,278
Other	\$621,277
Donated Services	\$682,915
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,749,413</b>



# Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Augusta • Bangor • Lewiston • Machias • Portland • Presque Isle • [ptla.org](http://ptla.org)

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to ensure that state and federal laws affecting poor people are upheld, while also addressing the systemic barriers to justice faced by Mainers with low incomes.

## OUR APPROACH

We provide free civil legal assistance in cases where legal aid can make a difference in one's ability to attain basic human needs or enforce basic rights.

## OUR VALUES

Respect • Optimism • Impact • Professionalism • Ownership • Monitoring for Results • Sustainability