



COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES
IN EAST PALO ALTO

Annual Impact Report

2021



Our Purpose

To address systemic inequities and promote transformative change, CLSEPA upholds the rights of local community members by:

- Keeping immigrant families together and on a path to permanency in the US
- Securing safe and affordable housing
- Building economic security for local community members and their families

Systemic and Pandemic Injustice

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA) is dedicated to advancing the rights of low-income communities of color in San Mateo and northern Santa Clara Counties, particularly in neighborhoods where systemic injustices persist.

As primary and secondary effects of the pandemic continued to hit communities of color hard, CLSEPA assisted tenants, workers, and immigrants living in our region.

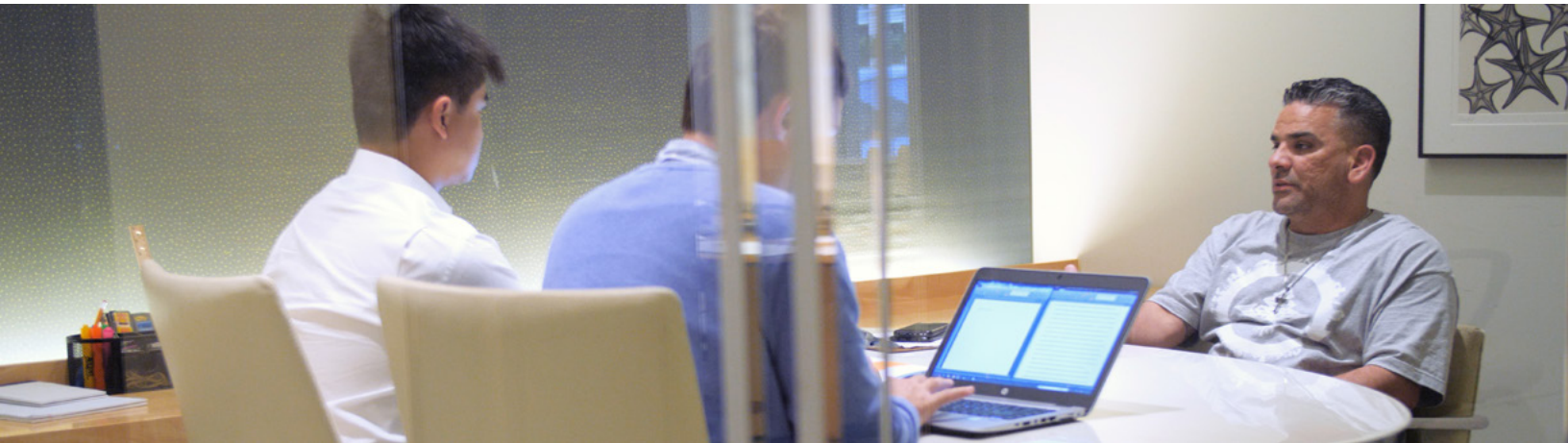


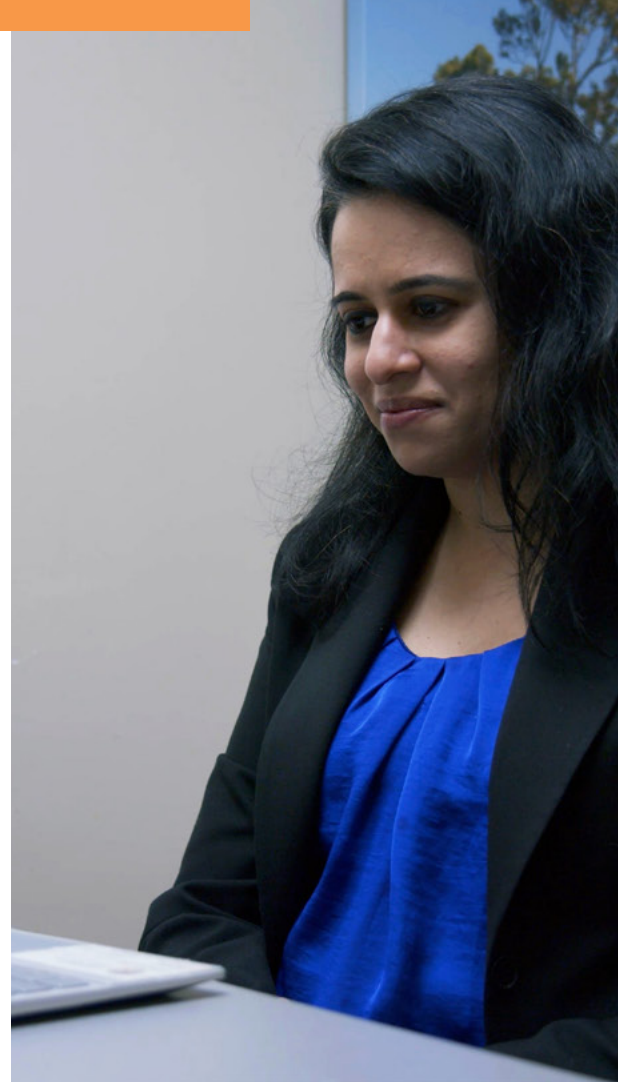
OVER 7,800
People Served

13,247 HOURS
of service
provided by Pro
Bono Attorneys



\$5.7 MILLION
free legal services
provided in San
Mateo and Santa
Clara Counties





SUCCESS STORIES

Hear from our clients in their own words



Hilsia's Story

<https://youtu.be/sOUdhd2X0R8>

Hear Hilsia's story of courage in the face of violence, and how she followed her aspiration to put family first to succeed in building a peaceful, happy life in the US for herself and her children.

Our Mission

The mission of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto is to provide transformative legal services that enable diverse communities in East Palo Alto and beyond to achieve a secure and thriving future.

Our Origins

Founded twenty years ago by community leaders to promote social justice and address systemic issues that threaten to displace Silicon Valley's diverse low-income communities, CLSEPA advocates for low income people and communities of color.

Ramon's Story

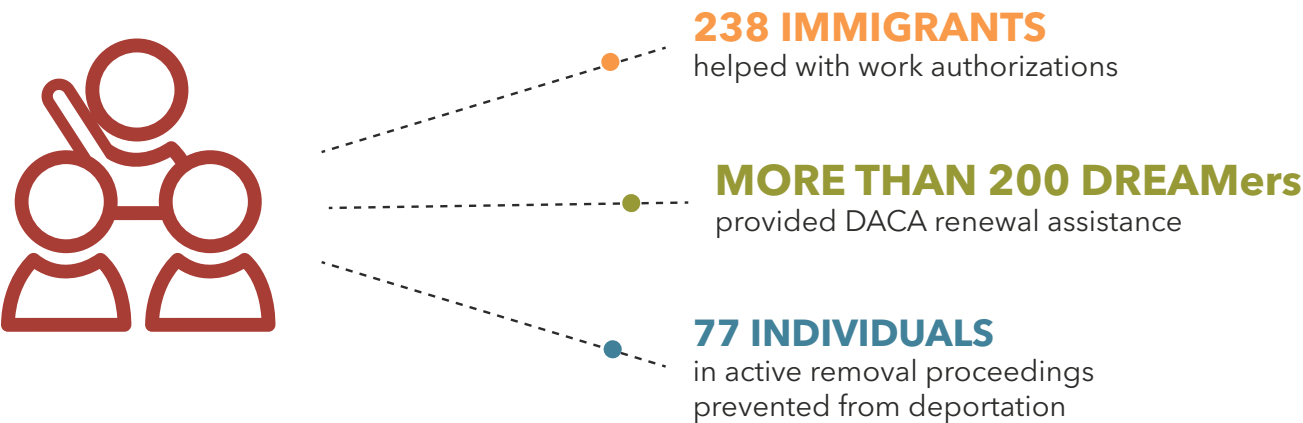
<https://youtu.be/hj9s0irBIZg>

Learn about how Ramon confronted a nightmare scenario of possible eviction during the pandemic, and how he and his children and grandchildren fought to stay in the home, school, and neighborhood they love.



IMMIGRATION

Helping immigrant families stay together and achieve a steady livelihood



Accomplishments


**ADVOCATED
ON BEHALF OF**

- People facing persecution in their home countries
- Dreamers brought to the US as children
- Abused, abandoned, and neglected children
- People who have been victims of crime


REPRESENTED

- Detained and non-detained immigrants in removal proceedings


HELPED

- Individuals apply for permanent resident status or US citizenship



San Mateo County Sees the Light

Truth Forums Reveal the Harm of Collaboration with ICE

As co-founders of the San Mateo County Coalition for Immigrant Rights, we have fought tirelessly for years to persuade the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office to put into effect a policy prohibiting collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

In 2020 and 2021, we worked with the community to conduct powerful TRUTH Act Forums. We also collaborated to spread awareness through illuminating media and information campaigns, and presented evidence to County Supervisors about the devastating impacts of the destructive practice of County collaboration with ICE.

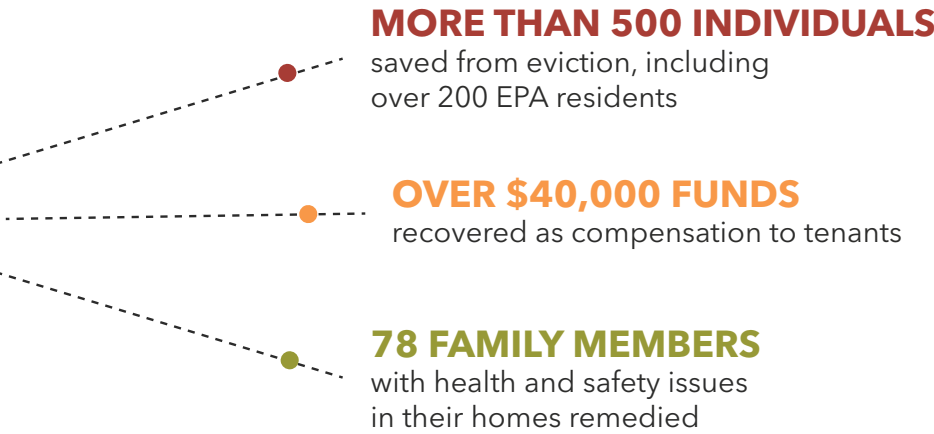
Success for Families and for the Entire Community

After years of determined advocacy efforts and heart wrenching testimony from dozens of community members adversely affected by ICE transfers, the Sheriff agreed to end this devastating County policy.

This success brings protection from distressing family separations and loss of beloved community members and brings San Mateo County in alignment with other Bay Area jurisdictions.

HOUSING

Preventing housing displacement and promoting community stability



Accomplishments

- TRAINED**
- UTILIZED**
- MENTORED**

Organizers, schools, and service providers about the eviction moratorium and the application process for state rental assistance

Strategic litigation to defeat a mobile home park rent increase

Silicon Valley pro bono attorneys to successfully bring eviction cases to trial



Persistence Pays Off

Improving the State’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program... At Long Last!

Multiple times throughout the year, as pandemic challenges continued to disproportionately impact low income communities of color, we pressed for improved policies that would make it easier for Californians to gain protections from eviction and receive rental assistance.

Recommendations to the State Legislature

Before major state initiatives to provide rent relief were launched, we recommended best practices for managing a rental assistance program to state policymakers. We described our own experience administering the Rescue Housing Fund, emphasizing the need for inclusive features such as: short streamlined applications; reduced barriers for tenants who lacked sufficient work, rental, or legal documentation; and multiple access points for people who do not use computers.

Despite our recommendations and those of other community organizations with experience delivering financial assistance, the initial state roll out of its Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) was not at all user-friendly. The application process contained over 30 pages of form after form that tenants were required to complete. The application was not accessible in languages other than English.

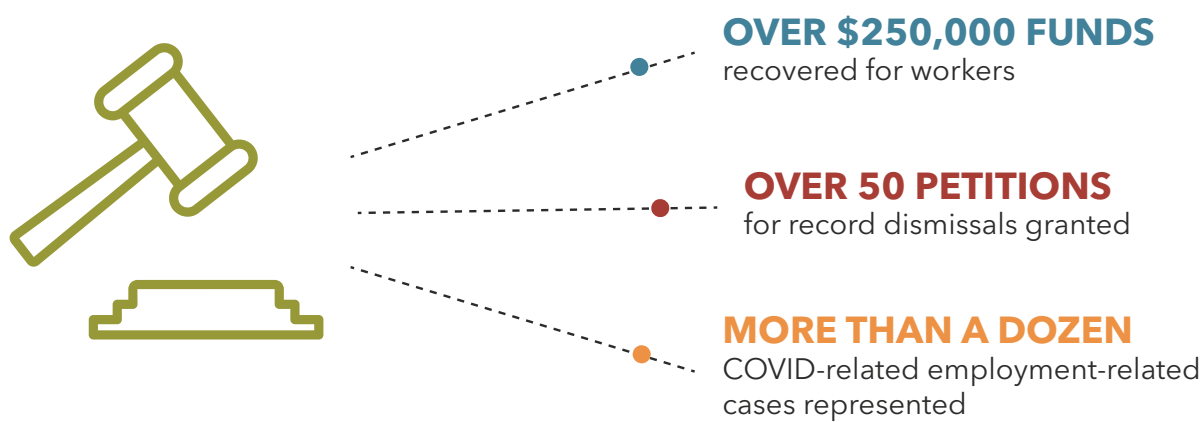
In the first few months of the program, relatively few tenants applied. It took weeks and even months to get questions answered or receive an update about the status of an application. Payments came at a very slow pace.

Persistent Advocacy

As local needs for rent relief became more dire, we joined with advocates including the Western Center on Law & Poverty, to apply pressure for modifications to ERAP. Eventually, adjustments were made, including a shortened application, improved language access, reduced barriers for subtenants and for workers in nontraditional jobs. This made it possible for greater numbers of people to apply for state relief.

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Empower community members to attain economic security



A Tale of Two Outcomes

Legislative Advocacy Leads to Positive Results – In the Law and For our Client

It is gratifying when our policy advocacy efforts lead to a legislative success that also benefits clients we are actively representing.

Our client Valeria owed fees to San Mateo County, and the outstanding balance put at risk her petition to clear her criminal record. In addition to representing Valeria, we were also advocating for passage of legislation to eliminate certain criminal fees. When AB 1869 was passed into law and became effective July 2021, this barrier to Valeria’s petition was eliminated.

Double Win

The new law cleared the way for Valeria to more easily submit an application to clear her record. Win/Win!

**Note that we often use pseudonyms in client stories to protect their privacy.*

Accomplishments

 **NEGOTIATED**

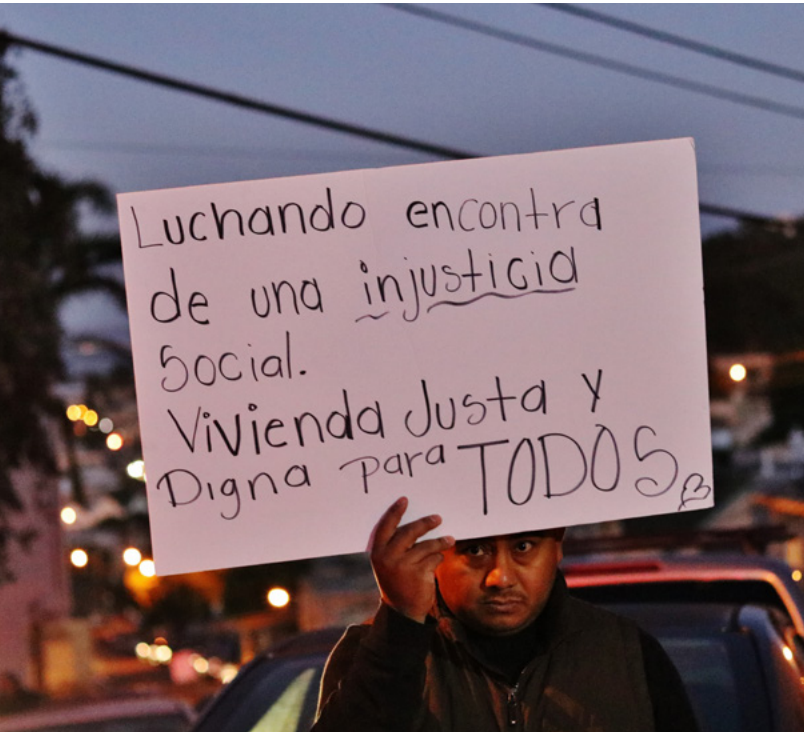
Resolutions to employment and workplace-related problems, including health-related issues of the pandemic

 **SUPPORTED**

Claims of employer wage theft

 **HELPED**

Individuals file petitions for criminal record dismissal



Thanks to support from the public, the attorneys and advocates of CLSEPA are honored to protect rights and champion social change throughout the year. We are able to stand by our community day after day because you care, and we are grateful for your partnership that makes our work possible.



www.clsepa.org

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