



BPI

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



MISSION

BPI is a public interest law and policy center dedicated to addressing compelling issues of social justice and quality of life in the Chicago region.

VISION

All people deserve equal justice and a quality of life that includes:

- Equal access to opportunity
- Healthy learning and living environments
- A voice in decisions that affect their lives

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ON THE COVER

Top Left and Bottom Right: A field trip to Kids Science Labs organized by BPI and the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition.

Top Right: Erica Rangel, Lead Community Organizer at Enlace Chicago, speaks about police accountability at a City Hall press conference co-sponsored by BPI.

Bottom Left: Oakwood Shores, a mixed-income housing development built on the site of the former Ida B. Wells public housing development. Photo credit: © Darris Lee Harris

Dear Friends,

Now.

Simple word. We use it offhandedly many times a day.

But, take a moment to think about it: **Now** also thunders a call to action.

At the 1963 March on Washington, Martin Luther King challenged us to know the “the fierce urgency of **now**.”

At this year’s Annual Dinner, keynote speaker Vince Warren of the Center for Constitutional Rights reminded us that “the time to act against injustice is always **now**.”

Though we’ve been at the work of making social justice a reality in Chicago for over 47 years, the powerful call of **now** fuels BPI’s work every single day.

Now means everything to the people we serve—an aspirational teen mom in Altgeld Gardens with a new baby to care for ... a troubled youth facing the grim prospect of another day in juvenile detention ... the family of a preschooler taking her first step into the better future a good education can bring ... an incarcerated man staring down his dim prospects for employment and healthy reintegration into society ... a family desperate for rental housing in a safe, decent neighborhood ... a young person with dreams, hungry to learn despite the odds against it in a low-performing school ... and a young person so harmed by trauma and poverty that she doesn’t even dare to dream.

In the pages of this annual report, you’ll find examples of what BPI—with your help—is doing **now**, today, to answer the call of justice in our housing, community development, education and early learning, and justice reform work, including the especially urgent demand for action **now** in our new police accountability effort.

BPI and our community partners, funders, supporters, and friends accomplished much together over the past year to advance the cause of justice.

We are very grateful that you are with us, because so much remains to be done—**now**.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas J. Brunick".

Nicholas J. Brunick
Board President



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Hoy McConnell, II".

E. Hoy McConnell, II
Executive Director



JUSTICE REFORM

Taking on a New Challenge

Why has BPI decided to become involved in justice reform?

For decades, BPI has worked to strengthen neighborhoods around Chicago and throughout the region. All too often, we have seen that our criminal justice system works to destabilize neighborhoods. A growing body of evidence clearly reveals that prison harms many youth in the juvenile justice system, who return to their neighborhoods more damaged than when they left, and without the tools they need to do better. Too many adults in the system serve long sentences for nonviolent offenses. Time in prison can severely diminish a person's subsequent life opportunities, largely because our inadequate prison re-entry system does little to help those released from prison have a real shot at success.

The plain truth is that our criminal justice system has a devastating impact on individuals and communities. It's in urgent need of reform, and that's why BPI has taken on this difficult challenge.

What's wrong with our bail system?

Every night, a large number of people are detained in Cook County Jail not because they're a serious threat or unlikely to show up in court. It's only because they don't have the money for bail. While they're being held in jail pending trial, some lose their jobs, experience a disruption in their education, or simply are unavailable to meet family obligations. As a result, low-income people who can't make bail have a compelling incentive to plead guilty to crimes they did not commit. This may get them home sooner, but with a criminal record that will follow them all their lives. It is our view that decisions about who is released from jail should be based on how great a safety or flight risk a detainee is, not how much money a person has.

Together with other advocates, BPI is exploring ways to eliminate the system of money bail. We're examining how other jurisdictions are making the change from a cash-based approach to a risk-based approach. We plan to advocate for similar reforms in Cook County and around the state.

How can we reduce the prison population?

Illinois has made great strides in reducing the number of youth in prison. Last year, BPI partnered with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) to create a roadmap to help the Department transform Illinois' juvenile justice system into one focused on youth education, development, and rehabilitation. Over the last year, the number of teens confined in Illinois youth prisons has dropped from around 750 on an average day to close to 400. As a result, IDJJ was able this year to permanently close one of its six youth prisons. We're now focusing on efforts that enable the transfer of more youth from harmful prison settings to ones more conducive to rehabilitation, which will result in dramatically improving lives for many disadvantaged youth.

Though Illinois has had success in reducing the number of imprisoned youth, the number of adults in prison is still staggeringly high. A growing number of states around the country are discovering that harsh prison sentences often don't make us safer and come at a high cost. We're working with a cadre of community-based partners to develop more rational sentencing policies. We're also working to make the case that if fewer people are imprisoned in Illinois, more money can be spent on efforts that have proved effective in reducing crime and recidivism. These alternative approaches aren't about being "soft on crime." They are about developing a criminal justice system that is based on hard evidence about what works and what doesn't. By focusing on what works, we can substantially reduce the prison population and reduce the crime rate at the same time. A smarter system will make everyone safer.

“Jail is where over-incarceration begins ... Jail populations have more than tripled since the 1980s. While the primary purpose of jails is to detain those who are a danger to public safety or a flight risk, many inmates are neither. Nearly 75 percent are held for nonviolent offenses ...”

– Julia M. Stasch, President, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Restoring Trust, Improving Practice

Photo courtesy of Catholic New World

What have we learned from Laquan McDonald's death?

The horrific killing of Laquan McDonald has forced all Chicagoans to confront brutal and awful realities.

Though most carry out their difficult job with competence and care, too many police officers are too quick to shoot without apparent justification. Others are too willing to lie to protect colleagues who have engaged in misconduct or broken the law. Too often, the victims are black and brown men or people suffering from mental illness. All too often, the system that was established to identify and address incidents of police misconduct fails to identify officers who act recklessly and fails to punish those who cause harm without justification.

The full measure of lives lost and families destroyed is incalculable. The social costs are staggering. Police accused of abusing civilians wind up back on the street, even when the City of Chicago is paying hundreds of millions of dollars to settle lawsuits related to their misdeeds. Surveys reveal that white and black Chicagoans' perceptions of the

police department are so starkly different that you'd believe they were describing police forces in different countries. Consider the corrosive effect on generations of black and brown children when their primary encounter with the power of government comes during interactions with police officers whom they perceive as dismissive of their dignity or, worse yet, a threat to their lives. With the social, civic, and political infrastructure so utterly frayed, our streets and neighborhoods become less safe for civilians and police officers alike.

What is BPI doing to increase police accountability?

BPI has been deeply engaged in efforts to address these challenges. Last December, the Mayor appointed a Police Accountability Task Force and asked it to make recommendations to improve accountability and build trust between Chicago police and the community. The Task Force created working groups, and BPI served on the Legal Oversight and Accountability Working Group. Based largely on the group's recommendations, the Task Force proposed a massive overhaul of Chicago's police accountability infrastructure.

Among its many recommendations, the Police Accountability Task Force Report calls for the following:

- Replace the civilian entity that investigates allegations of police misconduct (the Independent Police Review Authority) with another entity with broader authority, greater independence, and increased resources.
- Create an Inspector General for Public Safety, with wide-ranging authority to monitor and audit police practices and policies without interference from the Police Department or City Hall.
- Create a Community Board that would give citizens an independent voice in the police accountability system, with authority to question public officials and press for solutions.

The report also calls for more robust police disclosure and reporting requirements; reforms to police training, recruiting, and hiring practices; and stronger protection for whistleblowers who come forward to report abuses. It calls for officials to publicly acknowledge the city’s history of racist police practices and the damage done to communities of color due to police abuse and over-policing. Importantly, it also calls for a reconciliation process so Chicago can begin to heal and move forward.

The Task Force Report provides the City Council, the Mayor, and the Police Department with a clear roadmap to reform. BPI is now deeply involved on multiple fronts to make sure that real change happens.

What will it take to restore community trust in the police?

While we agree that a total overhaul of the police accountability system is necessary, we also know it’s not enough. Trust in the current system is broken, and simply creating new systems won’t make people trust them. The only successful path to rebuild trust requires a meaningful collaboration with the public. We are working closely with community organizations across the city to develop an effective process for authentic public engagement. Together, we envision an intensive process that will engage neighbors, schools, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, police districts, and aldermen.

Such an approach is vital to building trust and achieving consensus around how best to improve policing and police accountability, by ensuring that the people most directly affected by major reforms play an active role in developing them. It will be a delicate and demanding process, but it is the best path forward—and the just one.

“There is substantial evidence that people of color—particularly African Americans—have had disproportionately negative experiences with the police over an extended period of time.”

– The Chicago Police Accountability Task Force Report, April 2016

PUBLIC HOUSING

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities



What role will mixed-income housing play in meeting Chicago's affordable housing needs?

For more than 20 years, BPI has been an unwavering proponent of mixed-income housing as an effective approach to addressing concentrated poverty and segregation in Chicago public housing. In the last year, new public housing units were made available in mixed-income communities on Chicago's North, West, and South Sides, and planning is underway for additional mixed-income development at CHA's Ickes, Madden/Wells, Cabrini Green, ABLA, and Lathrop sites. At each location, BPI staff participate in the planning and implementation of CHA redevelopment efforts, while our legal efforts also play an important role. Last fall, BPI lawyers helped achieve settlement agreements for the redevelopment of Cabrini Green, ending lengthy disputes that had prevented redevelopment of vacant Cabrini land and buildings. The agreements require CHA to provide hundreds of additional public housing units in the Cabrini neighborhood to be developed in mixed-income settings.

CHA's Transformation Communities: What does the future hold?

BPI champions the view that quality housing alone is not enough to ensure the success of mixed-income developments. To thrive, communities must incorporate facilities and services that contribute to residents' physical, social, and emotional well-being, such as ready access to quality recreation, healthcare, education, and grocery shopping. An exciting example can be found in the Bronzeville community's Oakwood Shores development. Built on land that once housed CHA's Madden/Wells and Darrow developments, it includes not only residences but other features important to neighborhood success—such as the new Arts and Recreation Center with an Olympic-size swimming pool, a medical center, a pharmacy, a clubhouse, and a Mariano's grocery store due to open soon. The site is also adjacent to two elementary schools and an Urban Prep High School.

Why does BPI favor programs that help families move to low-poverty neighborhoods?

CHA spends a small fraction of its substantial voucher funding on mobility programs. While shifting greater support to mobility means serving fewer families, we believe it is important for CHA to help those who seek to escape concentrated poverty. This is an issue of such significance to BPI that we've devoted an entire page to why, in our view, housing mobility programs offer so much promise. Please read on.

A Hopeful Path to Reducing Concentrated Poverty

WHY DO WE NEED HOUSING MOBILITY?

Nearly one-third of all African-American children live in high-poverty neighborhoods. This fact alone puts them at higher statistical risk, as adults, of suffering:

- low educational attainment
- joblessness
- incarceration
- increased aggression and impulsivity
- clinical depression
- diabetes
- heart and lung disease
- lowered life expectancy



- The complexity of doing mobility “right”
- An historic bias for “place-based” neighborhood revitalization strategies
- A bureaucracy that shies away from programs that enable minority families to move into majority white communities

Evidence-based research overwhelmingly demonstrates that when low-income families of color move from segregated high-poverty neighborhoods to integrated lower-poverty communities, their life prospects are significantly improved. Beyond shelter, benefits include higher-performing schools, better health outcomes, increased job opportunities, and greater safety.

What is the challenge?

The federal Housing Choice Voucher Program, the nation’s core initiative designed to foster mobility, is hamstrung by HUD rules and practices and financially starved by Congress. Why do policymakers ignore such a proven way to address racially concentrated poverty that plagues so many of our urban centers? Their reasons include:

But these are explanations, not justifications. The burning question is: What can we do to change this country’s ostrich-like posture on housing vouchers?

Is any progress being made?

Important progress was made last year when a new study by Harvard economists showed significant income and educational gains for young children who made “moves to opportunity.” Now BPI is well along in planning a new mobility program and research study that will feature “two-generation” family counseling to address each family member’s needs, individually and collectively. We expect the results will show convincingly that paybacks far exceed costs.

We can’t say for sure what will break the mobility policy and funding logjam, but BPI’s hope is that powerful results from our new program will do just that.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Exploring New Approaches to Increase Opportunity

What is BPI doing to help create more affordable housing?

One reason there are so many people in need of affordable housing is that the costs of building housing have climbed higher and higher—driven in part by provisions of Chicago’s building code. The code was created to help ensure that homes and workplaces are safe and structurally sound. But, portions of it are antiquated or just plain unnecessary. The code hasn’t always kept pace with improvements in building techniques and materials. As a result, it’s much more expensive to produce housing in Chicago than in many communities nearby and around the country.

However, a small number of changes to the building code can significantly increase the number of new and rehabbed affordable homes in the city, reduce the number of vacant, dilapidated buildings that blight our neighborhoods, and increase private investment in the neighborhoods that need it most.

BPI is partnering with builders, engineers, and architects to identify high-impact ways to modernize the code and make it more affordable, and we’ve begun to work with a diverse group of advocates to support the effort. We’re already seeing results. Chicago’s new Buildings Commissioner is beginning to provide administrative relief for some of the unnecessarily burdensome code provisions we identified, which will help to lower costs immediately. At the same time, BPI is continuing efforts to make permanent code changes that will result in more affordable housing and more investment in our neighborhoods.

We’re also part of a coalition working to create Chicago’s first “Tiny Homes” development. Tiny homes are much smaller than traditional homes and can be built for substantially less. We’re hopeful this innovative new approach can be used as a model to help meet the housing needs of many population segments, including single, low-income working people, veterans, and LGBTQ youth.

Is the foreclosure crisis finally behind us?

While the number of families losing their homes has declined significantly, some neighborhoods, especially on Chicago's South and West Sides and in some south suburbs, are still overwhelmed by vacant properties. These properties weaken communities by driving crime up and property values down, while lowering the tax base and imposing high costs on local governments.

That's why in 2012 BPI helped to create the Cook County Land Bank—and why BPI is now working to help it thrive.

The Land Bank acquires vacant properties, makes sure they are well-maintained, and then works to return them to productive use. These restored properties can then be used for everything from new community gardens to rehabilitated housing to commercial development, sowing the seeds of economic revitalization and spurring major redevelopment.

Today, the Cook County Land Bank is making important progress. By next year, it will have helped to transform hundreds of vacant properties. In a few years, it should be thousands. BPI will continue to support the Land Bank's growth and help ensure that it has the tools and resources necessary to transform not only homes, but entire communities.





ALTGELD-RIVERDALE EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

Boosting Children's Chances for Success

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

On the southeast edge of Chicago, the geographically isolated Altgeld-Riverdale area is home to CHA's largest traditional public housing development, Altgeld Gardens. It also encompasses the surrounding low-income communities of Golden Gate, Concordia Place, Riverside Village, and Pangea.

Altgeld-Riverdale Profile

- 2,000 households
- 6,000 residents
- More than 50% under age 18
- 95% African-American
- Three childcare centers
- Four elementary schools
- Public library
- Community health clinic
- Park district facility with youth and teen center
- Limited access to public transportation
- No nearby full-service food store

It was four years ago that BPI launched the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Initiative. This innovative, community-based effort includes a coalition of more than two dozen member organizations, all focused on strengthening early learning opportunities for young children from birth to age eight. BPI facilitates monthly coalition meetings to foster continuous coordination of programs and services. Through the initiative, many new community services have been introduced. These include a doula/home visiting program for pregnant women under age 21, an early language development program, a preschool enrollment initiative, preschool-to-kindergarten transition programs, and out-of-school enrichment programs.

What's being done to upgrade community facilities at Altgeld Gardens?

At this writing, CHA is putting the finishing touches on the renovation of 218 Altgeld apartments that were previously unoccupied. This will result in some 500 new residents, many of whom will be children, bringing the total population to around 4,500.

With so many new residents moving in, BPI vigorously advocated that CHA simultaneously take steps to improve the public spaces and infrastructure

at Altgeld Gardens. CHA agreed to make the following improvements:

- A new, significantly enlarged library
- A new childcare building and renovation of another childcare center
- An upgraded park district facility with new recreational space
- Newly paved streets

These enhancements represent a significant victory for Altgeld residents and are especially meaningful for the children and youth living there. It's very good news for the entire community.

What work is being undertaken to close the “30-million-word gap”?

Research has shown that many children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words by the time they are four than other children. This puts them behind when they start school, and too often, they stay behind. To help address this gap, BPI has launched an exciting new program with the Chicago-based nonprofit, Language Empowers All People (LEAP). With its highly-trained and experienced staff, LEAP is dedicated to developing language and literacy skills among young children in communities of need throughout Chicago.

At Altgeld-Riverdale, BPI staff and LEAP language specialists have created a promising new language and literacy program for babies and toddlers who attend programs sponsored by three different community organizations.

LEAP trainers work with staff at each organization, teaching them how to conduct specialized interactive classroom activities that help children express their feelings and expand their vocabularies. Staff members also learn to model these activities for parents and caregivers for use at home.

Not only will the BPI-LEAP program help close the “30-million-word-gap,” it will serve to strengthen parent-child bonds and help Altgeld-Riverdale’s youngest children to start school better prepared to succeed.

Why are BPI and the Early Learning Coalition focusing a new program on the transition from preschool to kindergarten?

Altgeld-Riverdale teachers know from their everyday experience what researchers have documented. PreK to kindergarten transitions are vitally important for all children, especially children from low-income families, many of whom live under difficult and stressful circumstances.

(continued)



ALTGELD-RIVERDALE EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

Boosting Children's Chances for Success

With support from BPI and the CPS Office of Early Childhood Education, preschool and kindergarten teachers are implementing a year-round multi-faceted set of activities—both in classrooms and out—designed to ensure that each student enters kindergarten cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready to succeed. Importantly, many of these activities actively engage parents as well.

Unlike most PreK transition programs that involve only PreK students within a single school, our Altgeld-Riverdale Initiative involves a cooperative effort among all four community elementary schools, as well as the two local

early childhood learning centers. Why is this important? Because it means that no matter what preschool or childcare center a child attends, that student will be prepared to succeed in any kindergarten classroom in the community.

And how will we know if our new Transitions Program is working? To help answer this question, we have engaged researchers from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to evaluate the program's impact on students, parents, and teachers over time. We'll fill you in on what we learn in next year's Annual Report.



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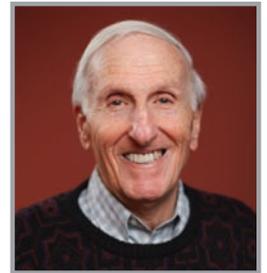
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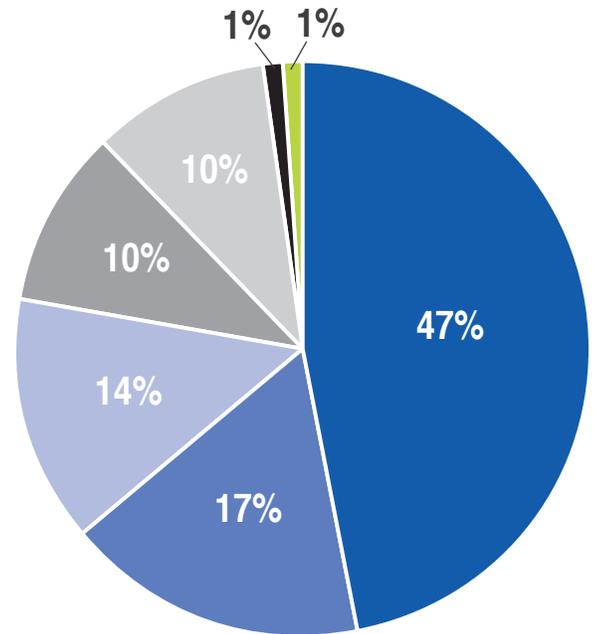


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SOURCES OF FUNDS

TOTAL — \$1,958,500

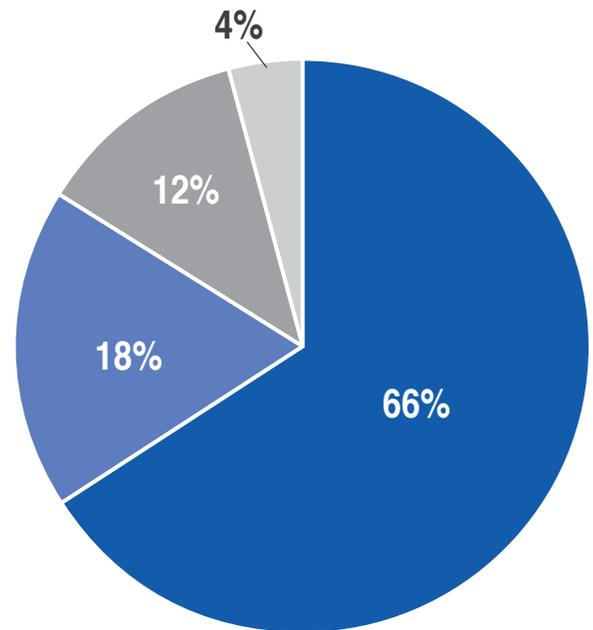
 Foundations.....	\$931,600
 Attorneys' Fees	\$329,600
 Fellowships	\$266,500
 Endowment Fund.....	\$200,000
 Individuals.....	\$193,600
 Other	\$21,400
 Operating Reserves.....	\$15,800



USES OF FUNDS

TOTAL — \$1,958,500

 Personnel.....	\$1,291,300
 Program Support	\$356,900
 Occupancy	\$225,100
 IT, Audit, and Office Services....	\$85,200



OBSERVATIONS

- Foundation grants and individual donations accounted for nearly three-fifths (57%) of 2015 revenue.
- Fellowships and legal fees provided nearly one-third (31%) of income, while the BPI Endowment Fund contributed another 10%.
- Nearly 85% of 2015 revenue was used to compensate staff and support BPI program initiatives.

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\$25,000 and above

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\$10,000 - \$24,999

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January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015*

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*BPI has made every effort to
make this list accurate and
inclusive. If you discover an error
or omission, please accept our
apologies. We would appreciate
your advising us so that we may
correct our records.*

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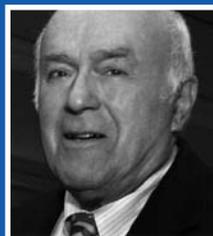
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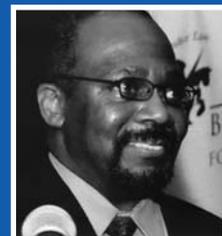
BPI is saddened by the recent passing of three of our past presidents. We are deeply grateful for the leadership, dedication, and service of Elliot Lehman, Robert “Bud” Lifton, and William H. Farley, Jr. Their unwavering commitment to social justice and to BPI continues to inspire us.



ELLIOT LEHMAN



ROBERT “BUD” LIFTON



WILLIAM H. FARLEY, JR.



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BPI is a public interest law and policy center that for 47 years has worked to create a just society. BPI strives to resolve compelling issues of social justice and quality of life in the Chicago region by addressing the many challenges of urban poverty, increasing housing and educational opportunity, strengthening communities, and improving Illinois' justice system.

Considered one of Chicago's most tenacious and versatile advocates for the public interest, BPI lawyers and policy experts engage in legal and policy research, advocacy, organizing, litigation, and collaboration with nonprofit, community, governmental, business, and academic organizations to accomplish our mission.