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Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Access to Justice Board,
I am so happy to present the Board’s 2019 Annual Report. The current Board is, as far as my memory goes, one of the most diverse ATJ Boards. Of our ten members, we have three members who are not lawyers. We have four members from outside King County with two of those from Spokane. We have an administrative law judge, a superior court judge, and a federal bankruptcy court judge. Half of our Board are people of color. Half of our Board are women. While diverse, we all share the deep conviction that all people in the State of Washington should have access to the legal system.

We are now in the second year of the State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid. The members of the Alliance for Equal Justice all have taken its directives seriously. I am both amazed, and impressed, at the vigor in which the Alliance members have devoted their resources to carry out the directives. The one directive, that permeates all others, is the advancement of race equity. Alliance staff, directors, and volunteers have undergone trainings to become educated, or better educated, so that they as individuals, and as members of organizations, can take steps to address this systemic problem. If that was the only achievement the Board could report as occurring this past year then it would have been a great year. But there’s more.

Every other year the ATJ Board produces the statewide Access to Justice Conference. The ATJ Conference had not been held in Spokane since 2000. With the slight urging of one of our Board members we determined it was time to return. The Alliance, as one of its goals, is to engage the general community. We carried that goal into the planning, and execution, of the conference. We set records for the number of non-legal system attendees and presenters for this year’s conference. We recognized leaders, both within and outside the legal community, with various awards. The ATJ Board started the weekend off with a joint meeting with the Minority and Justice Commission to advance one of our goals of supporting immigration advocates. Finally, a shout out to Jaime Cuevas Jr. and Angeline Thomas, and then Gloria Ochoa-Bruck who took Angeline’s spot when life called her to take on another calling, as co-chairs of this year’s conference. The goal of advancing leadership opportunities was carried out by these three committed individuals.

I wish I could go on but that should give you an inkling of your Board’s work. Each of us is thankful that we are given this opportunity to move our legal system one step closer to being a justice system.

Salvador Mungia, Chair
Access to Justice Board
The 2019 Access to Justice Conference, Amplifying the Power of Community, illustrated the collective power of bringing together a diverse group of people committed to equity and justice work. A record breaking 325 attendees came to Spokane to learn from and inspire each other. We welcomed community activists, social service providers, civil and criminal attorneys, judicial system leaders, students and academics, funders and policymakers from across Washington State.

“Really great conference. I’ve attended about 15 of them — and this was one of the most powerful. At first, I thought it would be less helpful because it wasn’t as focused on traditional legal skills/poverty law. Instead, I found that the broad community focus and inclusion of other community groups really expanded my way of thinking about issues and inspired me to think of creative collaborations for the future.”

– ATJ Conference Attendee

The conference sessions followed four intersecting threads:

- **Trauma-Informed** sessions provided the science behind trauma and understanding the ways that trauma affects communities most harmed by often-compounding structural bias factors such as poverty, race, gender, disability, ethnicity, and linguistic barriers.

- **Criminal Justice** sessions discussed how systemic racism, over-policing, excessive sentencing laws, widespread socioeconomic inequality, and the cash bail system all contribute to complex problems and identified alternative solutions to a more equitable system.

- **Race Equity** sessions provided opportunities to learn from each other to strengthen our race equity competency and continue to break down the barriers that lead to racialized systems of oppression, within our own organizations and the broader justice system.

- **Community focused** sessions shared examples of how to make our equity and justice work community-informed and community-driven, truly amplifying the power of community.
AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

Understanding that justice for all will only be achieved when we center the voices of those most impacted, the conference was infused with opportunities to amplify those voices. We kicked things off with a Native American tribal ceremony led by Spokane Tribe Leader Pat Moses and student drummers, showing our respect for the Spokane Tribal land we were using. Listening sessions set the tone for the conference as we heard directly from communities impacted by the justice system, including immigrant and refugee communities, formerly incarcerated individuals, and Native American Tribal communities. A highlight of the conference was the Saturday plenary where Sandy Williams of Black Lens News facilitated a panel of local leaders of color who discussed the Spokane community’s involvement to reform the local criminal justice system and address persistent racial disparities.

POWER IN COMMUNITY

Acknowledging our collective power to affect change, the conference focused on community building and accessibility. We raised more than double the amount of sponsorship money as previous years, which allowed us to provide scholarships to 87 individuals to attend the conference, many of which were community and non-traditional partners. Throughout the conference we provided unique opportunities designed to create space for different types of connecting, learning and self-care. Networking Supper Clubs provided a space to meet new people with shared interests. Racial justice caucusing groups found solidarity in addressing race equity goals. Idea Labs gave attendees a chance to connect one on one with a subject matter expert. And a yoga room and family room provided quiet spaces for attendees to unwind and focus on self-care.

“I had been feeling very burnt out and discouraged and this conference gave me the inspiration I needed. It was awesome to get to hear about some of the amazing work happening around the state (and in other parts of the country). I feel a renewed sense of energy and hope.”

– ATJ Conference Attendee
“The most important thing I took away from the conference was the theme of elevating voices and working “with” communities who need legal aid rather than “for” them. There was a focus on finding legal and community solutions with participation from those that are most affected by the legal issues they face. I appreciated this theme that was clearly planned and conveyed in each workshop I attended.”

– ATJ Conference Attendee
Members of local Native Tribes provide insights to form a better understanding of and communication with Tribal groups.

Conference attendees provide input on equity and justice work being done across Washington.

Organizations and justice groups share about their work in the Justice Joint (i.e., exhibitor hall).

Attendees participate in a facilitated strategy session to map out our collective equity and justice efforts across the state.

For more information on the 2019 Access to Justice Conference:
- View the conference agenda and other materials at allianceforequaljustice.org/accesstojusticeconference.
- Photos from the conference are on the ATJ Board’s Facebook Page.
Many years ago the ATJ Board planted a seed and set a goal: find a way to encourage strategic leadership development within the Alliance for Equal Justice so that effective leadership and collaboration is not just a happy accident. That seed grew into what became the “Equal Justice Community Leadership Academy” in 2013, but what followed was beyond what anyone expected. Since 2013, through what is now just known as the “Leadership Academy” more than 140 legal and community advocates have gained adaptive leadership skills and powerful collaboration partners. And further, in 2017, a committed group of program alumni transitioned this program into what has become a sustainable training, consulting, and coaching resource known as JustLead Washington.

Now in its third year, JustLead is on a mission to build a sustainable network of legal and community leaders who can effectively and collaboratively work toward equity and justice. As a nimble capacity-building partner geared toward supporting State Plan efforts, JustLead primarily offers training, consulting, and coaching support centered on leadership and organizational development, racial equity, and effective collaboration between legal and community partners. Along with the Leadership Academy, JustLead staffs the Race Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI), a statewide community of legal and justice system partners who are working together to eradicate racially biased policies, practices, and systems, and directly engages Alliance and other equity & justice partners. Says Executive Director Jennifer Werdell, “Our partners and clients have always been tested and targeted, but now it is more important than ever for the law and justice systems to be operating at their highest and best use: to strategically and proactively aim toward a world that is just, equitable, and fair. This includes making sure that we ourselves are not perpetuating injustice.”

“With JustLead’s guidance, support, and feedback, I was able take the mountain of information and questions I had down to clear goals and a powerful vision to ground our strategic planning retreat. Their approach and coaching style of being open and curious while being very clear helped me unpack and articulate where our organization has been and what is possible as we prioritize equitable access to justice.”

– Eloise Barshes, Chelan-Douglas Volunteer Attorney Services
HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY19:

- Distributed the REJI Organizational Race Equity Toolkit which has been accessed online almost 2,000 times. The Toolkit compiles a wide range of resources to support organizations that are considering or implementing race equity initiatives. Recent updates have included added resources on how to host racial justice caucuses and sample curriculum for local volunteer attorney-oriented CLEs.
- Coordinated a two-day biannual Statewide Legal Advocate Training for over 250 civil legal aid attorneys and casehandlers across the state with tracks including community lawyering and race equity.
- Hosted a bi-monthly REJI Race Equity Webinar CLE Series reaching more than 200 participants on topics such as understanding structural racism and creating equitable organizational culture.
- Partnering to offer volunteer attorney and publicly available race equity CLE trainings in Whatcom, Clark, and Pierce Counties.
- Reaching more than 950 equity & justice advocates statewide through direct race equity training, coaching, and facilitation support.
ATJ Technology Principles
Update 2.0

The ATJ Technology Principles have come a long way. After an extensive process to update the current ATJ Technology Principles that date back to 2004, the last year has been a process of gathering critical buy-in on the Principles from key justice system partners, particularly the Judicial Information Systems Committee of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

By mid-2018, the ATJ Technology Committee had finalized the substance of the ATJ Technology Principles, focusing on:

- Plain language for the new Principles
- Responsiveness to a diverse range of communities
- Reflective of today’s changing technology, and
- Consistency with the State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid to Low Income People

Once drafted, the ATJ Board, through its Technology Committee, shared the Principles with the Administrative Office of the Courts for their feedback and approval from the perspective of those who will implement the Principles. Over a series of discussions and meetings, AOC staff shared edits and comments to the Principles that provided additional clarity and structure to how they will be implemented at the court level and financial implications. Considering AOC’s response, the ATJ Board agreed to submit the newest version as Principles instead of as Rules, as previously considered, and to add a preamble clarifying the aspirational nature of the Principles.

After incorporating AOC’s feedback, the ATJ Technology Committee once again sought input on the draft Principles from various court associations, including the District and Municipal Court Judges’ Association, the Superior Court Judges’ Association, the Washington State Association of County Clerks, and the Board of Judicial Administration. The ATJ Technology Committee also hosted a webinar on January 25, 2019, for the greater court and legal aid community to hear about the Principles and ask questions.

At its June 28, 2019, meeting, the Judicial Information Systems Committee voted unanimously to endorse the revised ATJ Technology Principles. The ATJ Board is pleased to have received this endorsement from the Judicial Information Systems Committee prior to forwarding them to the Supreme Court to request adoption.

Claudia Johnson Receives the Access to Justice Board’s First Promoter of Justice Award

While in the Tri-Cities, the ATJ Board awarded Claudia Johnson with the first Promoter of Justice Award in recognition of her equity and justice impact in the Tri-Cities and beyond, her commitment to race equity and her work to collaborate with others. Claudia has worked in legal aid for over 20 years and has been a pioneering leader in harnessing technology to advance justice through work with Pro-BonoNet and LawHelp Interactive. The Board honored Claudia’s leadership in the Tri-Cities where she has been a refuge and ally to LGBTQ youth. She worked with the ACLU to bring the Richland School District to heed and change their exclusionary policies of LGBTQ kids and their right to organize school clubs starting in middle school.
Every year the Access to Justice Board carves out time to hit the road and meet with local communities to learn about their unique challenges, opportunities and experiences accessing justice. This past year, the Board visited Walla Walla in September and the Tri-Cities in April. These visits are invaluable to the Board as we build connections across the state that inform our work. Here is a quick snapshot of the trips and what we learned along the way.

In September, we headed to Walla Walla where we kicked off the activities with a networking reception for equity and justice advocates hosted in partnership with the WSBA Diversity Committee. Listening sessions throughout the trip gave us the opportunity to learn about a broad range of access to justice efforts, including hearing about the recent work of the local Northwest Justice Project team and the Blue Mountain Action Council Volunteer Lawyer Program. The Board also met with students from Heritage University and Whitman College who shared digital storytelling projects reflecting on immigrant identities and rural access to healthcare as part of Pop Up Justice’s RadLab program. Local immigration lawyer Wendy Hernandez shared about a local coalition of justice advocates who had formed grassroots efforts to support immigrant rights as the ICE presence in Walla Walla was growing.

While in the Tri-Cities in April, we again collaborated with the WSBA Diversity Committee to host a networking reception for local equity and justice advocates. To focus on walking our talk on the importance of community partners and holistic services, we took the opportunity to reach out to more community service organizations to better understand the broader intersection of legal aid and community needs. The Board conducted site visits with the Benton Franklin Community Action Committee, the Support Advocacy Resource Center and the Inspire Development Centers, each serving a broad range of community needs. To grow our understanding of the local judicial system, we hosted a roundtable lunch with local judges, the Prosecutor, Public Defenders, the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and the Northwest Justice Project to discuss issues faced by the local community and how to work together. The Board also sat down with the local Northwest Justice Project team and the Benton Franklin Volunteer Legal Services to learn about their exemplary work.

These trips are truly a highlight of our year and we find it incredibly valuable to learn about the dedication to equity and justice throughout the state.
The Equal Justice Coalition Finds Success in Olympia and DC

STATE FUNDING:

This year, after many civil legal aid supporters turned out for Equal Justice Lobby Day in Olympia and contacted their representatives, the Legislature passed a biennial budget that will significantly improve access to justice in Washington. Legislators approved a funding increase of more than $7 million for the Office of Civil Legal Aid, including 20 new civil legal aid attorney positions around the state, as part of the Civil Justice Reinvestment Plan to reach the “minimum access” standard of service delivery. When the CJRP began in 2017, the deficit of attorneys needed to achieve minimum access was 110. Recent state funding increases, along with additional federal investment, will bring the deficit to less than 50 by 2021. The budget also included much-needed stabilization funding for the Northwest Justice Project, to protect previously gained attorney positions and maintain client service given new financial obligations resulting from a collective bargaining agreement, and $300,000 in compensation equity for pro bono programs to retain staff and increase service capacity. This will be leveraged with $300,000 in additional investment from the Legal Foundation of Washington over the biennium.
The EJC’s annual trip to Washington, D.C. brings civil legal aid leaders from our state to Congress to speak up for access to justice. This year’s group met with all 12 of Washington’s Congressional delegation, to educate lawmakers on the impact of civil legal aid programs in their districts and to ask for increased funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). The EJC asked Washington’s members of Congress to support LSC’s request for $593 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2020. LSC is funded at $415 million for the current fiscal year. The Northwest Justice Project, Washington’s sole recipient of federal legal services funds, receives around $7 million, and would see a notable increase in funding if Congress approves the LSC request. For the third year in a row, the Trump Administration budget proposed the complete elimination of the LSC. But LSC has broad bipartisan support in Congress, including among the Washington delegation. Washington Representatives Suzan DelBene, Denny Heck, Pramila Jayapal, Rick Larsen, Kim Schrier, and Adam Smith signed onto a recent bipartisan letter urging LSC’s Congressional oversight committee to protect legal aid from budget cuts and increase next year’s funding level to $593 million. Both Washington Senators, Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, also support the increase. Such an increase would be an important step forward, and would provide critical services for thousands more low-income families and individuals across Washington, but it would still be far below the agency’s historic peak, and would not meet the overwhelming need for civil legal assistance.
The mission of the Statewide Pro Bono Council is to further access to justice by supporting and advocating on behalf of the Volunteer Lawyer Programs in Washington State.

The Pro Bono Council had a fruitful year growing its own infrastructure capacity and advocating for improved access to pro bono services. A few highlights include the following.

**COMPENSATION EQUITY**

Recognizing that below-market compensation is an equity issue which impacts Volunteer Lawyer Program’s (VLP) ability to attract and retain diverse and qualified staff, VLP staff and boards, funders, the Equal Justice Coalition, lobbyists, and partner organizations came together to identify the issue of lagging compensation for VLP staff. With nearly 50% staff turnover at VLPs during the past two years, low compensation has and will continue to impact continuity of program operations; relationships with volunteers and community partner organizations; and ultimately results in disrupted client services. VLPs worked closely with the Office of Civil Legal Aid and the Legal Foundation of Washington to secure state and private funding that will support critical compensation increases at VLPs across the state beginning July 2019.

**HOUSING AND EVICTION REFORM**

Staff, board members, and volunteers at five VLPs collaborated to draft and file Amicus Briefs in support of a Thurston County housing case that ultimately resulted in a Washington State Supreme Court decision that will protect tenants who face eviction. VLPs also shared local data about eviction cases and housing justice project legal clinics with statewide policy experts to inform changes to existing eviction laws and processes. Four VLPs will participate in a cross-state study comparing eviction cases with tenants who are represented by counsel and unrepresented tenants.

**ENSURING CLIENT SAFETY**

Several VLPs identified the need to clarify Rule of Professional Conduct 6.5 which governs conflicts of interest at legal clinics. Together with members of the ATJ Board Rules Committee, the Pro Bono Council will request that the Supreme Court include a clarifying comment to the rule that will help to keep VLP applicants and clients safe while they seek help and navigate the legal system.
Gathering to Learn, Share, and Celebrate

**PRO BONO COUNCIL MILESTONES**

The Pro Bono Council finds its strength in creating space for VLPs and justice system partners to learn from each other and bring attention to the value of pro bono legal services. Here are a few milestones from the past year:

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<td>OCTOBER 2018</td>
<td>The King County Council recognizes the critical importance of pro bono legal help to address the need for free legal aid with a proclamation honoring Celebrate Pro Bono Week. Governor Inslee’s Office also issues a proclamation to highlight October as Pro Bono Month in Washington State.</td>
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<td>OCTOBER 2018</td>
<td>Washington State Bar Association’s October issue of NW Lawyer highlights civil legal aid, including profiles of 11 pro bono attorneys and limited license legal technicians across Washington.</td>
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<td>OCTOBER 2018</td>
<td>VLPs gather in Wenatchee to attend the Statewide Legal Advocate Training. VLPs partner with civil legal aid and other organizations to lead sessions about successful mentorship models, working with community organizers, best practices to serve clients who experience language barriers, and a forum about client access and intake to the legal aid network.</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY 2018</td>
<td>In conjunction with the Goldmark Luncheon, VLP staff and board members host JustLead trainers to learn about race equity and organizational approaches to address race equity in local communities. VLPs also participate in focus group listening sessions with Legal Foundation of Washington Board of Trustees after the Goldmark Luncheon.</td>
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<td>MARCH 2018</td>
<td>New staff leaders from 5 VLPs gather in Seattle to meet one another and learn about the Alliance for Equal Justice, including connecting with colleagues at CLEAR and Northwest Justice Project’s Screener Unit, discussing State Plan implementation with members of the Access to Justice Board, and connecting with Legal Foundation of Washington and Campaign for Equal Justice staff.</td>
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<td>JUNE 2018</td>
<td>VLP staff and board members gather for the Access to Justice Conference and VLP pre-conference meeting in Spokane.</td>
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“The Pro Bono Council has made us feel much less alone. VLPs tend to be small, unique unicorns of organizations, but the PBC has empowered us to build a camaraderie of uniform action, shared interests and strategic planning. Because of the PBC we feel we truly have a voice at the state level, and have greater power to increase access to justice for our local communities.”

—Elizabeth Fitzgearld, Executive Director, Clark County Volunteer Lawyers Program

![JustLead WA trainer Omid Bagheri leads a race equity training for the Pro Bono Council.](image1)

![Pro Bono Council members and staff share that community building is one of the strengths of the Council.](image2)

![Pro Bono Council members participate in their annual meeting.](image3)
ATJ Board 2019 Year in Review

Join us in looking back at some of the highlights of the Board’s projects and initiatives over this past year.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2018:
BOARD IN WALLA WALLA
The ATJ Board travels to Walla Walla to meet with staff and board members from the Northwest Justice Project, the Blue Mountain Action Council, RADLab students and faculty, and local immigrant rights advocates to learn how they are working with their communities to advance justice.

MARCH 22, 2019:
WELCOMING VOLUNTEER LAWYER PROGRAMS
The ATJ Board meets with new directors of various volunteer lawyer programs to welcome them to the Alliance and share more about our work and how to get involved.

APRIL 18-19, 2019:
BOARD IN THE TRI-CITIES
The ATJ Board travels to the Tri-Cities to meet with staff and board members from the Northwest Justice Project, the Benton Franklin Volunteer Legal Services, Benton Franklin Community Action Committee, the Support Advocacy Resource Center, the Inspire Development Centers, local judges, the local Prosecutor, Public Defenders, and Northwest Immigrant Rights Project to learn how they are working with their communities to advance justice.

MAY 29, 2019:
THE FUTURE OF ONLINE LEGAL SERVICES
In partnership with Microsoft and the Practice of Law Board, the ATJ Board hosts a stakeholder meeting with technologists and legal advocates to discuss revisions to GR 24 that could affect online legal service and to learn how they are working with their communities to advance justice.
JUNE 14, 2019:

JOINT MEETING ON ICE IN THE COURTHOUSE
The Access to Justice Board and Minority and Justice Commission hold a joint meeting in Spokane to learn from immigration advocates about enforcement taken by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol in courts across the state and the effect it is having on access to justice.

JUNE 14-16, 2019:

ACCESS TO JUSTICE CONFERENCE
ATJ Board hosts the 20th Access to Justice Conference “Amplifying the Power of Community” where 325 people gather in Spokane to learn, strategize, partner, collaborate, renew and recharge.

JULY 12, 2019:

BOARD CONTINUES COMMITMENT TO EQUITY
The ATJ Board holds an all-day retreat with JustLead WA facilitators to advance their internal race equity and organizational identity work.

JULY 31, 2019:

ATJ TECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES 2.0
After almost three years of revisions and stakeholder engagement, the ATJ Board submits updated ATJ Technology Principles to the Court for adoption.
ATJ Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff

2018-2019 ACCESS TO JUSTICE BOARD MEMBERS

Francis Adewale
Espervanza Borboa
Judge Laura T. Bradley
Hon. Frederick P. Corbit
Hon. David S. Keenan

Lindy Laurence
Michelle Lucas
Salvador A. Mungia, Chair
Mirya Muñoz-Roach
Terry J. Price

STAFF

Diana Singleton
Access to Justice Manager

Bonnie M. Sterken
Access to Justice Specialist

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Access to Justice Board is not able to accomplish its work without the dedication and support of its many committee volunteers. The Board is grateful to the support and guidance of its standing committees over the past year.

COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS

Communications Committee: Lindy Laurence
Delivery System Committee: Salvador Mungia and Alex Doolittle
Equal Justice Coalition: Andy Sachs
Pro Bono Council: Eloise Barshes and Elizabeth Fitzgearld
Rules Committee: Hon. David S. Keenan and Chris Durban
Technology Committee: Judge Laura Bradley and Jordan Couch
The Access to Justice Board honors colleagues and partners who promote access to justice through their leadership, courage, and innovation by presenting the Access to Justice Awards. Congratulations to this year’s award recipients!

- Resolution Washington receives the ATJ Community Leadership Award.
- Erin Lovell receives the Norm Maleng Leadership Award.
- Jim Bamberger receives the ATJ Leadership Award.
- Columbia Legal Service’s Working Families Team receives the ATJ Advocacy Award.
- The WorkFirst Life Skills Program, led by Saada Hiltz, receives the ATJ Partnership Award.
- Judge LeRoy McCullough receives the ATJ Judicial Leadership Award.
- The Racial Equity Committee of the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council receives the ATJ Partnership Award.

2019 ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD WINNERS