HOUSING CLIENTS RAMON AND MORENA GONZALEZ WITH HOUSEMATES, A TOTAL OF 12 ADULTS THREATENED WITH EVICTION
Dear fellow supporters of Open Door Legal,

I first heard about Open Door Legal five years ago, during a particularly divisive time in our country’s history. I remember attending my first ODL gala, which took place a few days after the 2016 presidential election, and feeling incredibly grateful that an organization like this existed to fight for those who have long suffered from abuse of power. Hearing from clients about how ODL had literally changed their lives - rescuing a mom from an abusive relationship, restoring safe and affordable housing after harmful living conditions due to a neglectful landlord, defending immigrants, and keeping families together - gave me hope.

I am a healthcare professional and one of the few non-lawyers on the ODL Board of Directors. I long held the assumption our government provided a safety net for legal help, in the same way there is a Medicaid safety net for those who need affordable health care. But after a walking tour of the Bayview neighborhood with Adrian, I was shocked to hear that wasn't the case, and that clients still need to pay out of pocket for civil cases, even when they have been clearly wronged. Access to justice, a basic human right, really isn’t possible without organizations like ODL taking the case.

As we enter the third year of a pandemic that has lasted longer than any of us expected, the need to protect marginalized communities from the threat of eviction, from punitive employers, and from increased domestic abuse is as important as ever. The hard work ODL does to bring justice to the most vulnerable in our city continues to inspire and give me hope.

I feel honored to serve alongside fellow supporters like you in the fight against oppression and systemic injustice. Thank you for joining in this important work, and restoring hope with us.

Thank you,

Amy Chiu
Healthcare Product Leader
Open Door Legal Board Member
In 2021 overall, our team met 912 families in need. With each of them we were able to address their legal problems and drastically change their experience of poverty.

Thank you for helping the law belong to ALL of us.
2021 CLIENT OUTCOMES

471 CASES CLOSED BY PRACTICE:

- Civil Litigation
- Elder
- Employment
- Family
- Housing
- Immigration

399 CASES OPENED

$2,880,765 TOTAL DEBT CANCELLED AND ASSETS AWARDED

4,500 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED INFORMATION ON COVID-19 HOUSING HELP THROUGH VISION ZERO DISPLACEMENT

74% POSITIVE CASE SUCCESS RATE.

"Knowledge is power. For a client to understand their case fully, it's empowering."
Sumaya Bamakhrama, Volunteer Lawyer.

Sumaya worked with our Immigration and Family Law teams focusing on Arabic clients.
"For our whole team to make the best decisions that drive our mission, they need to have accurate and timely financial information. And for donors to feel confident in giving, they need to see that their support is well used and accounted for.

We want to avoid the bottlenecks of the traditional nonprofit model, and so we want to support the whole person. Internally, we have transparent compensation pay bands and recently rolled out a mental health benefit for our whole staff. As a direct service org, our people are our product, and we are proud to invest in them."

-Rachel Mellby,
Director of Finance
"We cannot build a world of universal access to legal representation alone. At ODL, our goal is to accelerate justice to minimize the oppression that marginalized communities experience every day. In order to build the world of access, we are utilizing technology to scale our mission and vision.

Our long-term goal is to create a platform that updates the operating system for all legal aid providers by removing the complex administrative burden while also easing client interactions for referrals and data reporting. We can build better systems for our legal partners, we can increase justice around the world."

-Charmaine Lacsina, Director of Innovation and Technology
"Like many other domestic violence survivors, I felt lost and stuck. I’m sure Avi would have been in danger. But I had no more money to protect her. Many women like me don’t leave because they don’t have the resources or any kind of help. So they stay. There is no hope in sight.

When I found Open Door Legal, they helped me for free. The Family Law team never gave up on me and Avi, and were empathetic and persistent. They fought alongside me to get full custody, and we won.

I am so excited to hear that our city wants to protect survivors like myself and my daughter.

Legal services helped me protect my family and build our future. I want this for all other survivors and anyone who is currently in this situation.”

-Karen Miron, mother, former ODL client, and domestic violence survivor
OBTAINED OR PRESERVED ACCESS TO HOUSING FOR

120 FAMILIES

60 GUEST WALK-INS FOR HELP ON THE GOVERNMENT "HOUSING IS KEY" FORM

260 HOUSING CASES WORKED ON

"Before Open Door Legal, we did not believe we were protected. Because we did not know the law, we couldn’t ask for it. It was so important to know that we have rights."

-Ramon Gonzalez, Housing Client
This year, we launched Vision Zero Displacement, an initiative to ensure that no one in our community lost their homes due to the pandemic. We partnered with Daybreak PAC to make calls and distribute literature throughout the areas where we work.

4,600
HOUSEHOLDS REACHED WITH HOUSING SUPPORT FOR VISION ZERO DISPLACEMENT.

7,500
PHONECALLS TO ALMOST 500 INDIVIDUALS. WE FOUND OUT THAT 13-20% OF THOSE CALLED NEEDED HOUSING SUPPORT.
Dear supporters and friends of ODL,

The activist and scholar James Orbinski says that humanitarian work is an “imperfect offering.” That was very clear to Adrian and I when we co-founded Open Door Legal fresh out of law school in 2013. We had two people, an annual budget of $35,000, and a handful of volunteers. It was certainly imperfect, but because of that, we knew we had to innovate to do things efficiently and with a high quality.

I hoped, but could hardly imagine, that Open Door Legal would be helping so many people in so many different areas of law as we are today. We are even more universal in our access, have expanded our areas of service, and are meeting more needs of the marginalized populations we serve.

How were we able to expand in this way? When something imperfect happens, we never blame the person first. Instead, we ask questions: What process might we have needed to put in place? How can we automate this to reduce the risk of human error? There are many tasks that require high-level legal skills, and we want to make everything else simple and easy so that our attorneys have the energy left to innovate around case strategy, trying out-of-the-box things and helping people in ways no one else can.

Recently, a family law client came to us. She needed her birth certificate amended in order to get her much-needed Social Security benefits. The problem was, she was born in a time and place - mid-century South Carolina - when birth certificates for young Black girls were not always properly recorded. Our family law team used our new, customized Case Management System to set task reminders, record actions taken, and log emails related to the case so they could work together to ensure she got the benefits she deserved.

There were times in those early years when I wasn’t sure we would make it eight more weeks, let alone eight more years. Yet our ability to innovate has allowed us to shape our imperfect offering into something that resembles justice. There is nothing I’m prouder of. Thank you for being a part of this journey. We hope you’ll stay with us to see what lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Virginia Taylor
	Co-Founder and Director of Legal Services
Open Door Legal
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

THE LAW BELONGS TO ALL OF US

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