

WRITING IMMIGRATION LAWYER REFUGEE ASYLUM DETENTION DEPORTATION VISA CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION GREEN CARD APPLICATION IMMIGRATION REFORM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT PUBLIC POLICY LEGISLATION FREEDOM OF INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY OPEN GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION POLICY BORDER CONTROL MIGRATION HUMANITARIAN AID CULTURAL EXCHANGE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY MICHIGAN LAWYER HOLLAND MICHIGAN COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES LEGAL RIGHTS LEGAL EMPOWERMENT EQUAL JUSTICE IMMIGRATION LAWYER RIGHTS MOVEMENT SOCIAL EQUALITY LEGAL DEFENSE LEGAL AID CLINIC LEGAL REFORM REFUGEE RIGHTS ADVOCACY LEGAL RESOURCES EMPOWERMENT DUE PROCESS IMMIGRATION STATUS EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMMIGRATION REFORM ENFORCEMENT LEGAL SUPPORT IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY FAIR TREATMENT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMMIGRATION COURT CIVIL SOCIETY HUMAN RIGHTS LAW ACCESS TO JUSTICE EDUCATION RACIAL EQUALITY SOCIOECONOMIC JUSTICE LEGAL ASSISTANCE SOCIAL SERVICES LEGAL REPRESENTATION IMMIGRANTS MIGRATION POLICY LEGAL AID ORGANIZATION POLICY ADVOCACY REFUGEE SUPPORT COURT INTERPRETING RIGHTS EQUALITY ACCESS TO JUSTICE LEGAL REPRESENTATION LAWYER LEGAL SYSTEM CIVIL RIGHTS DISCRIMINATION HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

CALLING ALL ADVOCATES: 2023 IMPACT UPDATE





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This report contains data, statistics, stories, and impact reflecting the efforts and work of Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates during calendar years 2022 and 2023. Prepared and published with care in mid-2023 by a diverse team of local professionals and advocates.



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DEAR LIGHTKEEPERS,

The past several years have been a period of immense transition and growth. We, as lightkeepers and immigrant advocates, have often been on the front lines of change and we rely on our powerful ability to bridge political divides at every level of society because people—all people—deserve to be treated with dignity.

Our efforts to welcome immigrants, refugees, and migrants from across the globe have increased in the number of new cases, new clients, new approvals, and new programs. Every day we rely on the depth of our community's resilience and capacity for empathy and kindness. In other words: We have grown West Michigan's collective commitment to be a place where all people can thrive.

We hope that you'll find reflected in this report the impact of our community's investment into LIA. Looking back at 2022, it is impossible not to be excited and inspired at the scale of service we accomplished for our new neighbors and friends.

We welcomed, treated with dignity, demonstrated empathy, showed respect, and honored the diversity of cultures our community reflects - all without compromising the quality of legal services and care.

We're asking you to look forward with us as we imagine a future that is far from certain, but full of hope. LIA will need to continue to expand its services to provide legal services, education, and advocacy to a growing number of immigrants who hope to make their homes here. Please help immigrants - all immigrants - benefit from LIA's services with your support.

With hope,

Sarah, Maggie, and David
Co-Directors of Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates

ACCREDITATION AND EXPANSION

After years of waiting and a lengthy application and accreditation process, **Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates was finally granted approval in 2022 for its status as a Recognized Organization by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Executive Office for Immigration Review. We are one of only 25 DOJ Recognized Organizations in Michigan and the only one in Holland, Michigan.**



From left to right: Laura Ramirez, DOJ Accredited Representative, Sarah Yore-Van Oosterhout, Managing Attorney, and Vidal Sequeira-Cortez, DOJ Accredited Representative

This recognition elevated two of LIA's team members from legal assistants to DOJ Accredited Legal Representatives - Laura Ramirez and Vidal Sequeira-Cortez. This recognition, made possible by their years of experience and training under Managing Attorney Sarah Yore-Van Oosterhout, means

that Laura and Vidal are authorized to provide immigration legal services without a law degree or admission to the bar.

As Accredited Representatives, both Laura and Vidal have taken on more cases with more clients - essential to meeting the growing legal needs of immigrants in our community.

We are honored to be working alongside these passionate, talented, and newly-certified immigration advocates, and continue to support their ability to serve our community's immigrants.

NEW AMERICANS LEGAL CLINIC

What began in 2021 in response to the crisis in Afghanistan led in 2022 to the innovative and new asylum legal services program - the New Americans Legal Clinic (NALC).

Hundreds of Afghan clients submitted applications for asylum through this program, which was made possible by dozens of volunteers, legal services summer interns, collaboration and partnership with Bethany Christian Services, Samaritas, Wayne State University, Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, the Office of Global Michigan, and unprecedented grants from foundations across Michigan.

LIA's Afghan clients were among the first in the



876

Legal Program
Clients Served in 2022

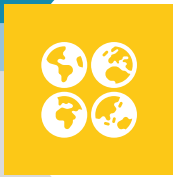
▲40% from 2021



98.8%

2022 Case
Approval Rate

▲1.5% from 2021



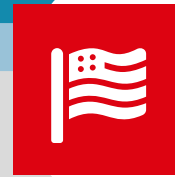
37

Client's country of origin in 2022
> 63 since 2015



415

New Cases Opened in 2022
▲94% from 2021



45

New American Citizens in 2022
▲125% from 2021

United States to complete this essential step towards permanent residency and stability and among the very few who did so with full representation by a dedicated Asylum Attorney. At the time of release of this report in July 2023, LIA has only received decisions for a handful of asylum cases. While we wait patiently for the remainder of cases, we can report that every one of those decisions have been approvals.

Asylum Attorney Sam Filcik and Asylum Legal Assistant Grace McConaghie have continued to serve local clients seeking asylum from countries such as Ukraine, Nicaragua, Cuba, Honduras, Haiti, and Venezuela.



The NALC team celebrating the final asylum application being completed including Asylum Attorney Sam Filcik AND Asylum Legal Assistant Grace McConaghie.

TRIAGE PROGRAM

At the close of 2022, we launched a new legal service - **Legal Triage Appointments** - to serve our growing asylum-seeking population in West Michigan.

Triage has already helped 120 people identify and access the legal services they need to achieve safety and stability, with many cases leading to full representative relationships with our office.

These cases are those that may need the most immediate attention due to the strict filing deadlines for asylum cases. To meet this urgent and growing need, Triage quickly identifies cases to get these new neighbors pointed in the right direction for legal and social services.

Hello, my name is ____ from Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates to assist you today with your legal needs and potential asylum case. We're going to ask you some questions about your immigration, travel history, and country of origin. Do you have any questions? Some of these questions may be absolutely necessary in order to determine if you need our help. If at any point the conversation becomes too difficult, please let me know.

SERVING GRAND RAPIDS

As a smaller and fairly new nonprofit law office, Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates continues to operate with agility and flexibility.

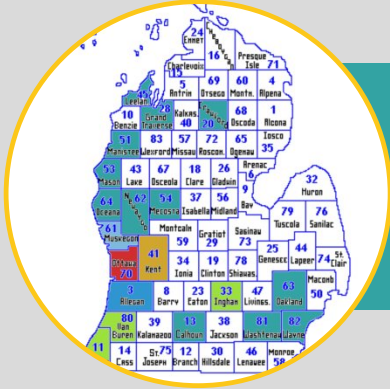
In 2023, LIA was consulted by Grand Rapids area refugee resettlement agencies regarding legal services for migrants from Cuba and Haiti. Often unaware of their legal options or status, these immigrants presented a particular challenge for resettlement agencies.

Historically, LIA has mostly served residents of Ottawa County. Recognizing our unique adaptability to pivot to serve new immigrant populations with urgent legal needs, LIA has committed to serving more than 330 new



clients from Cuba and Haiti residing in the greater Grand Rapids area throughout 2023 and into 2024.

Continuing to develop these partnerships, we are working on additional legal clinics modeled on the innovation and success of the New Americans Legal Clinic.



Immigrants from 18 different counties in Michigan found relief through LIA's Legal Services in 2022!

COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS

In response to the growing number of arrivals without status qualifying them for federal resettlement services, LIA is partnering with leaders at Third Reformed Church to build a relationship-based network of support for migrants. This program is specifically designed to serve new neighbors who do not qualify for any state or federal assistance and are unable to be employed for up to a year after their arrival.

Community Navigators is a program to connect and equip our new immigrant neighbors with established members of the community who can help connect them with necessary services required to establish stability, belonging, and safety. Traditionally, these services are provided by resettlement agencies and funded by government grants.

Community Navigators addresses the gap for the many non-citizens who are not eligible for assistance, but need and deserve a humane welcome and support all the same. It can take

many months to years to receive a decision on asylum applications and employment authorization. Community Navigators seeks to address the flaws and gaps in the U.S. immigration system one relationship at a time. The program will launch in Fall 2023, pairing up two mentors with each immigrant family.

COLEADERSHIP AND MOVE

In March of 2023, LIA announced the conclusion of the leadership transition after the departure of our former Executive Director by naming three staff as co-leaders. Sharing of duties, with the goals of fostering collaboration, prioritizing mental health and minimizing burnout, and growing our existing staff into leadership roles were just some of the goals of this initiative. We are happy to report that Sarah, Maggie, and David are continuing to work together in shared leadership, setting LIA apart among West Michigan's already innovative nonprofit community.

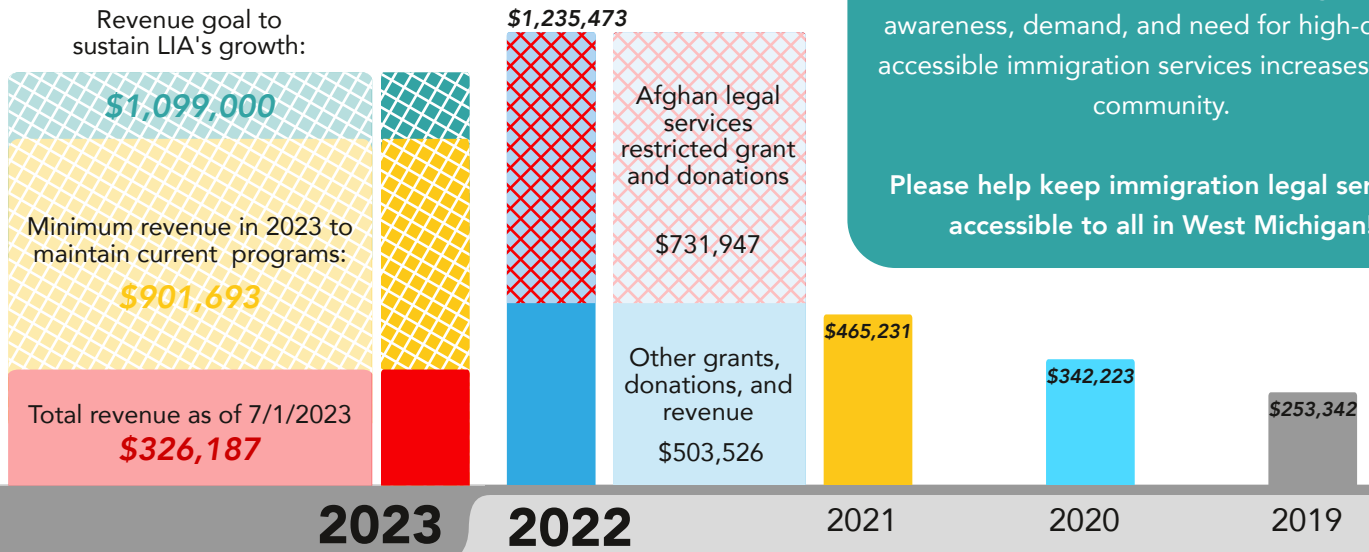
In May of 2023, we MOVED! In 2021 and 2022, we expanded our services and have more than doubled the size of our legal services staff. All of this additional work was done in the same space, originally designed to host just six people. When an opportunity to double our space was presented in early 2023, we jumped, quite literally, into action. Today, our new location feels like home, and we have the facilities to meet with all of our clients in privacy and safety. We are so grateful for all of the volunteers and supporters who made this move possible with their time, skills, lending of equipment, and donation of materials



85%

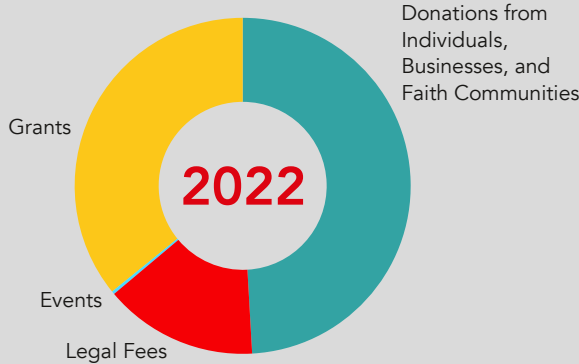
Case approvals in 2022 granting or maintaining employment authorization

SUSTAINABILITY



Our annual revenue continues to grow as awareness, demand, and need for high-quality accessible immigration services increases in our community.

Please help keep immigration legal services accessible to all in West Michigan!



Revenue History

	2021	2020	2019
Donations	55.0%	47.9%	61.8%
Legal Fee Income	17.6%	21.9%	26.1%
Fundraising Events	5.9%	6.8%	8.4%
Grants	21.4%	23.4%	3.7%
Total Revenue	\$465,231	\$342,223	\$253,342

Donations	49.1%
Legal Fee Income	14.8%
Fundraising Events	0.3%
Grants	35.8%
Total Revenue	\$1,235,473



Please Donate Today at <https://lia-michigan.org/give>



We need the help of every lightkeeper and immigrant advocate to make this work possible! Just as all people are welcome at Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates, all support is welcome.



SAVE THE DATE!

Please join Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates and our amazing speakers for a day-long learning experience about making West Michigan more welcoming and inclusive place for immigrants and refugees. Registration will open in late summer/early fall.

Visit our website to learn more:

lia-michigan.org/summit

ABOUT LIGHTHOUSE IMMIGRANT ADVOCATES

Strong communities in the twenty-first century take intentional steps to connect and actively include people of all backgrounds.

Since 2015, Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates has provided direct immigration legal services to thousands of immigrants and refugees. We have advocated on behalf of immigrants and refugees on the local, state, and federal levels.

While most immigration law offices focus exclusively on legal services, Lighthouse offers a unique service model that includes holistic case management, community education, and advocacy.

We meet the individual needs of immigrants and refugees with low-cost legal services provided for a nominal fee to those living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG). Approximately 95 percent of Lighthouse's clients fall below this level. Furthermore, Lighthouse believes that everyone is entitled to low-cost, high quality immigration legal services. For this reason, there is a sliding fee scale for those living above 200 percent of the FPG.



OUR MISSION:

BRINGING STABILITY TO WEST MICHIGAN
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH
LEGAL SERVICES, ADVOCACY, AND EDUCATION.