



DC VOLUNTEER  
LAWYERS PROJECT



# City Innovation Fund Re-Establishment Amendment Act of 2017 Hearing

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Testimony of Jackie Love-Baker  
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Good morning. My name is Jackie Love-Baker, and I am the Director of Development of the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project. Our mission is to recruit, train and support a network of volunteer lawyers to provide high-quality, *pro bono* legal services to low-income domestic violence victims and at-risk children in Washington, DC. We use an innovative and cost-effective volunteer lawyer model, which allows us to leverage a large network of hundreds of volunteer lawyers with a small number of experienced supervising attorneys. We provide our volunteer attorneys with everything they need to represent victims and children, including online and live specialized training, mentoring and in-court supervision by an experienced Supervising Attorney, an online pleadings library, professional liability insurance, and reimbursement for litigation costs. Using this model, DCVLP attorneys are able provide legal services to **hundreds of victims and children** each year from all wards of the city on a relatively modest budget while ensuring high-quality representation. In 2016, **225** volunteer lawyers provided over **15,000** hours of free legal help to our clients.

DCVLP received a **City Fund Capacity Building** grant in the fall of 2014 to implement a new case management system for our growing caseload of victims and at-risk children. Before 2014, we were using a cumbersome database that made it difficult and time-consuming to store client information, track cases and generate grant reports. With **City Fund's support**, we were able to transition our client and case information to Legal Server, which is a database specifically designed for legal service organizations. Switching to Legal Server has greatly improved the efficiency of our organization. We can now easily perform conflicts checks, track client and case data, and use the system to confidentially share important information about our clients, calendar court dates and store case files.

We also received support from the **City Fund Capacity Building Grant Program** to move our donor database from an excel spreadsheet to E-Tapestry, a donor database management system that provides comprehensive, up-to-date reporting, seamless website integration, analytics, heightened security and built-in payment processing. This cloud-based system provides staff with the ability to quickly, efficiently and securely access information at any time.

The **City Fund Capacity Building Grant Program** was very important to our organization, because while many foundations will fund our programs, few are willing to invest in critical infrastructure improvements. The investment from the **City Fund Capacity Building Grant**, greatly improved both the efficiency and sustainability of our organization. Since receiving the grant our revenue has increased from **\$1.1 million** in 2014 to **\$1.5 million** in 2017. We have also significantly increased the number of domestic violence victims and at-risk children we serve. In 2013, the year before we received the grant, we provided legal services to almost **400** low-income DC residents, and this year, we have provided services to almost **1,000**. Another aspect of the City Fund grant program that we greatly appreciated that was that the grant was spread over three years, which allowed us time to implement our new systems, adjust them as necessary, and train our staff on the new systems.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today and I hope that Council will continue to invest in capacity building for non-profits that are working diligently to improve the lives of low-income members of our community. I am available any time to answer any questions that this committee might have. Thank you.