Thank you. Just as COVID-19 created new issues and exacerbated numerous existing challenges facing older adults in DC, it also revealed the generosity of spirit across our region. As our community emerges from one of the most challenging years in recent memory, we have never been more grateful to have you on our side.

When the pandemic began, our physical offices closed. But our work – and our commitment to meeting the most pressing needs of older adults in DC – never wavered. We remained laser-focused on the issues most important to the lives of seniors: housing, economic security, self-determination, and health and safety. And with each of these issues, we added a spotlight on racial equity.

For LCE to best empower our clients, we must be a leader in advocating strongly for racial equity and social justice, both internally through training, education, speaking to one another in “safe circles” and having crucial and sometimes difficult conversations, and externally by critically evaluating new laws and policy initiatives affecting our clients, a large majority of whom are people of color. We are intentionally centering race in all of our work.

In the pages that follow, you’ll learn more about our work across these topics and how we shifted in response to the pandemic. It began with our Legal Hotline quickly shifting our operations so our attorneys could take calls from home, and every legal practice area, our Senior Medicare Patrol staff and our Ombudsmen devised new ways to reach and to support clients and long-term care residents remotely.

2020 also marked an important milestone for LCE: we celebrated our 45th anniversary of driving meaningful results for the community. Many of us gathered virtually in October to mark the occasion – but this feeling of celebration and gratitude endures.

Thank you, again, for your support and your partnership. We could not do this work without you on our side.

With gratitude,

Rhonda Cunningham Holmes,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Following the murder of George Floyd, millions of people across the country join together to demand justice and racial equity. Legal Counsel for the Elderly joined them in this cause.

LCE brings a racial equity lens to our interactions with the nearly 10,000 people we help each year. More than 90% of LCE’s clients are people of color. We know that building power among this population is essential to creating a more just and equitable society, as older seniors of color have lived through decades of discriminatory public policy decisions that attacked their dignity and diminished their options.

LCE is also a leader in reforming inequitable systems that disadvantage people of color across the Court, DC Council, and virtually all DC agencies whose work affects seniors. For more detail about our racial equity-focused city-wide advocacy work, please see pages 14 and 15.
Renters and homeowners alike turn to LCE in moments of crisis. When seniors face eviction, foreclosure, housing code violations, or other threats to their housing stability, LCE attorneys are often their last – and only – line of defense against well-resourced landlords and banks. We fight alongside seniors to ensure they can stay in safe, affordable housing while preserving home assets so they can pass them down to future generations.

For many of our clients, their home was the only place that they could feel safe from COVID-19. This made our work advocating for seniors’ ability to stay in their homes all the more urgent in 2020. Early in the pandemic, LCE joined a coalition of organizations who advocated for foreclosure and eviction moratoria in DC that went beyond that which was established by Congress in the CARES Act. Unfortunately, the eviction moratorium did not stop landlords from taking illegal acts – up to and including putting all of a senior’s belongings in trash bags and changing the apartment locks. We also have seen an increase in complaints of deferred maintenance. We have partnered with each of these clients to address illegal landlord activity. And as we assist each of these clients, we are also preparing for an anticipated tsunami of evictions as the moratorium concludes.

Client Spotlight

One of our 2020 clients was a 69-year-old man whom we’ll call Mr. M, who experienced homelessness following his battle with COVID-19. After spending three weeks in the hospital with COVID-19, Mr. M returned home to find his landlord had changed the locks. He knocked on the door, called the landlord, and called the police, but to no avail. Inside were all his belongings, as well as his asthma medicine and his wallet. With nowhere to stay and unable to afford a hotel, he wound up sleeping in a van for two weeks that his friend had parked in an alley. Mr. M then contacted LCE – and we knew immediately that the landlord’s actions were illegal. After an emergency filing and two virtual hearings, the Court ruled in Mr. M’s favor. Mr. M is now housed again, where he has recovered from the virus and returned to work as a handyman.
Elders living on low-incomes were already struggling when the pandemic hit, and then life became even more difficult. They needed additional assistance for housing, food and healthcare, and they needed help applying for unemployment. LCE was there to make sure they obtained the public and veterans benefits they deserved.

The vast majority of LCE’s clients are aged 60-plus and living below 200% of the federal poverty line. Living in such an expensive city with limited resources creates numerous challenges. Our “Public Benefits Check-Ups” determine if clients are receiving all the assistance that they are entitled to. We then help people secure public and veterans’ benefits and tax rebates that they deserve, while also helping people avoid scams and financial exploitation.

As a result of the pandemic, many of our clients lost their jobs or had their hours significantly reduced – in part because seniors were often the first to be let go from their positions, and in part because some seniors were reluctant to take on the risk of virus exposure in the workplace. LCE responded by helping people apply for unemployment, as well as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), SNAP (food stamps), and other public and veterans benefits. We helped clients secure their stimulus checks and ensured that those checks were not garnished by the government to pay debts. We also saw an increase in clients who are dealing with mounting credit card debt and falling behind on bills. In response, we have increased our work supporting seniors across these issues.

Client Spotlight
A 68-year-old Marine veteran contacted LCE after he had become paralyzed due to a spinal cord injury. Because of his injury, he would need to live in a nursing home, but he did not have the health insurance or financial supports necessary to navigate this. First, his LCE attorney helped to get him enrolled in Medicaid, which allowed him to be transferred to a Medicaid-approved nursing home. We then got the veteran enrolled with the VA to receive a pension, which he qualified for, but was not receiving. Typically, VA regulations stipulate that a veteran receiving nursing facility care would not be able to receive a full payment from the VA; however, we navigated the exceptions in these regulations to help the client receive a full pension payment.

As a result, the client obtained the medical care he needs, as well as a monthly pension payment of $1,171 for the rest of his life.
We ensure people receive the healthcare and safety they are entitled to, whether in their homes or in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities. This includes our legal advocacy and our work through LCE’s Office of the DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman, through which we routinely investigate complaints from residents at nursing homes and other community-based facilities and fight for their rights and dignity. LCE is also the home of DC’s Senior Medicare Patrol, which educates seniors so they can avoid Medicare scams. Early in the pandemic, LCE attorneys began conducting regular wellness checks for our clients. Given the trusting relationship that clients have with their LCE attorneys, they were often candid about any challenges they were facing – including ability to get food, access prescriptions, and otherwise feel safe and healthy. Through these conversations, we connected seniors to numerous services, while also surfacing challenges in their lives. In particular, we noticed an increase in suicidal ideation among our clients. We provided training to staff on how to navigate these difficult conversations. We also responded to an increase in complaints of domestic abuse by beginning to represent clients seeking civil protection orders. Finally, our inability to enter nursing homes and other long-term care facilities did not diminish our advocacy for residents there. We provided posters that explained their rights, delivered masks and other personal protective equipment so residents could protect themselves and continued to resolve complaints by conducting telephone investigations.

Client Spotlight
One LCE client, who was resident of a DC mental health facility, fell ill and was hospitalized. Recovering from her illness wasn’t her only challenge: her group home claimed she was “challenging” and refused to take her back. Facing imminent homelessness, she called LCE. We immediately recognized this as “hospital dumping,” an illegal yet all-too-common practice. We learned that the facility had not found a safe home for the resident to go – which is required of legal discharges. LCE’s Office of the DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman advocated on behalf of the resident with the facility and the regulatory agency overseeing the group home. We stopped the illegal discharge, ensuring that our client would have a safe, supportive home, and we put steps in place to assure it would not happen again.

In addition to their legal needs, seniors faced significant social isolation, and domestic violence calls increased to the LCE Hotline. LCE attorneys took extra steps to conduct wellness calls, and our staff trained on the proper way to handle calls from clients with suicidal ideation.
Life-planning documents provide elders with the legal means to assure their wishes in life and in death occur. We were not permitted to visit people in nursing homes, other long-term care facilities, or even their homes, so we conducted ‘porch signings,’ and even assisted clients through nursing home windows.

LCE’s work in
SELF-DETERMINATION

Being able to control decisions about your life is something we want to do starting in our teens, we’re not about to give it up in our elder years. However, without necessary legal paperwork, older adults will not be able to control decisions about their health and their assets over time. We help our clients create life-planning documents like wills, powers of attorney, and transfer on death deeds so they can make decisions about their future and handling their assets.

The health threats of the pandemic made many seniors reconsider their life planning documents. Were they up to date and relevant? Did they exist at all? Finalizing these documents also became a challenge. For example, how is a notary able to witness a signature when it was not safe to be near one another? LCE devised numerous strategies – including mail and outdoor ‘porch signings’ to keep this vital work moving forward.

Client Spotlight
A client who lived in a nursing home needed help updating her life planning documents. In the 20 years since she had originally drafted them, many relatives had passed, including partial owners of her home, and some people were no longer active members of her life. She wanted to make changes to benefit the family members that were close to her. Additionally, as she was in a nursing home facility for the long-term, she also wanted to name a Power of Attorney whom she trusted would handle her affairs and step in to make healthcare decisions. LCE arranged a “window visit” in August 2020 to complete these documents. The client stayed at a table behind a floor-to-ceiling window near the entrance to the nursing home. Our staff had prepared the documents with tabs to indicate where to sign and stood on the other side of a window to witness. A nursing home social worker sat with the client and used his phone so our staff could provide instructions. After we watched the client sign, the social worker brought out the documents, and we signed as witnesses and the notary notarized.
LCE takes the lessons of our work with thousands of older adults each year to advocate for changes to city-wide laws and regulations. In addition to our work with the DC Council, which seeks to ensure that our clients are centered in conversations about policy, regulation, and distribution of resources, we work with virtually all DC agencies whose work affects seniors. We leverage the content-area expertise of our staff and the voices and views of our clients, whom we train to tell their story through testimony, the media, and other means.

The COVID-19 pandemic – and the unique threat that the virus posed to seniors – required fast action to ensure that low-income seniors were not forgotten by policy makers. Here is just a sampling of our policy wins from 2020:

- We advocated for a moratorium on the filing of new debt collection cases during the public health emergency to ensure that those facing financial hardship during the pandemic did not further deplete the funds they needed to meet their basic needs.

- Frustrated by a lack of transparency, and difficulty navigating the DC Health website for COVID-19 data from nursing homes, LCE gained access to the data – and posted it on our website to make it clearer to the public, and easier to find.

- LCE worked with the DC Council to introduce and pass legislation implementing a moratorium on discharges from long-term care facilities during the public health emergency and 45 days after it ends.

- LCE worked closely with legal services partners and the DC Superior Court to replicate our stand-by court services in the virtual world, ensuring that unrepresented litigants can still access our services and that virtual proceedings remain fair and accessible to them.

- LCE successfully advocated for changes to DC’s policy on what they require to obtain a new ID. Now, DC residents who are age 70+ can get a driver’s license or non-drivers ID without having to provide birth certificates. This is essential for many African American older DC residents who were born in the South and do not have birth certificates because they were not born in hospitals.

LCE advocates for all DC seniors and long-term care residents through our legislative advocacy. We testified and helped write legislation for DC eviction and foreclosure moratoria, ensured that residents could not be evicted from nursing homes, and did much more to further protect elders during the pandemic.
LCE’s work would not be possible without hundreds of volunteers who work on behalf of LCE clients each year. Some volunteers are attorneys who represent a client or conduct research on a policy matter. Others are trained experts in avoiding Medicare fraud, advocating for people in nursing homes, or answering calls on our Legal Hotline. As our work transitioned to virtual in 2020, these volunteers transitioned with us – finding new and creative ways to reach the community and support older adults.

Client Spotlight
A 100-year-old client risked losing her home after entering into a contract to obtain repairs to her home. Before starting any work, the company recorded a $53,600 lien against the client’s home. The crew also required the client to leave the house before work began – which she wasn’t aware of when she signed the contract, and which she was unable to do because of her disabilities. The construction company then demanded $15,000 in damages and an outrageous cancellation fee. These financial obligations put the client at risk of foreclosure. Arnold & Porter attorneys Elizabeth Carney, William Bosch, and former associate Amy Johnson successfully advocated that the company violated the D.C. Consumer Protection Procedures Act by wrongfully acting as both a mortgage lender and home improver. They demanded that the company withdraw its demand for $15,000 and release the lien on the client’s home. Due to Arnold & Porter’s diligent advocacy, the company conceded. The client can now remain in her home and pass this asset on to future generations.

Client Spotlight
Ms. H, an 85-year-old DC resident with disabilities, got a shock. DC Medicaid notified her that she was no longer eligible to receive in-home assistance from a Personal Care Aide. She counted on this support for basic functions and for support moving around her house. Without it, she may have to move into a nursing home or face risk of serious injury in her home. Fortunately, LCE pro-bono attorney Brooke Stanley of Covington & Burling intervened. She examined the details of this case and related law and realized that DC violated its own regulations when re-examining Ms. H’s case. These services never should have been terminated – and the judge agreed. Now Mrs. H can remain in her home with the supports she needs to stay healthy and safe.
Throughout 2020, individuals stepped up and expanded their generosity. Inspired by our work with older adults – especially while COVID-19 presented a grave threat to our community – people across all backgrounds, occupations, and industries gave generously. Below are some of the names of the most generous donors. To everyone who made our work possible, we are incredibly grateful.

$10,000 plus
Kevin J. Donnellan
William A. Isaacson & Sophia M. McCrocklin

$5,000 plus
Meredith Fuchs
Peter R. Kolker
Elizabeth Mitchell & Matt Mendelsohn
Richard F. Riley, Jr.

$2,500 plus
Amanda J. Waugh & Daniel A. Cantor
Kristin Dillon
Edna Kane Williams
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$1,000 plus
Anonymous
Daniel R. Barney
Phyllis & Barry Caldwell
Nancy Cariello
Margaret Emery & Massimo Calabresi
Walter Harris
Rhonda Cunningham Holmes & Ira Holmes
Ted & Judy Howard
Joseph & Kathryn Sullivan Kolar

$500 plus
Albert McKnight
Ira & Marilyn Polon
Elisabeth P. Poston
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Rawle Andrews
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The event was hosted by LCE Executive Director Rhonda Cunningham Holmes, with special appearances by AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins; DC Department of Aging and Community Living Director and former LCE employee Laura Newland; Chief Executive Officer at the DC Bar Foundation Kirra Jarratt; Chairperson, LCE Board of Directors Joe Kolar; former CEO and President of the Meyer Foundation Nicky Goren; and Executive Producer and Host of the Senior Zone radio show Shawn Perry. Thank you to all who joined us to celebrate!
Experts across government, foundations, law firms, and the corporate community recognize the expertise and unique services that LCE provides to the DC community, and their generous investment reflects this. We are so grateful to our institutional partners whose generosity makes our work possible in housing, economic security, self-determination, and health and safety.

$1 MILLION plus
AARP
DC DEPARTMENT OF AGING & COMMUNITY LIVING

$500,000 plus
DC BAR FOUNDATION
DC DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

$100,000 plus
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATION ON AGING

$40,000 plus
The Agua Fund
The Eugene & Agnes E. Meyer Foundation

$25,000 plus
DC MAYOR’S OFFICE ON LATINO AFFAIRS
GALLOGLY FAMILY FOUNDATION

$15,000 plus
Arnold & Porter LLP*
The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
Latham & Watkins LLP*

$10,000 plus
Covington & Burling LLP*
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$7,500 plus
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Kropp Mosley PLLC*
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$2,500 plus
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP*
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Caplin & Drysdale, Chartered
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If you would like your firm or company included on this growing roster of LCE supporters, contact Development and Communications Director Billy Fettweis at wfettweis@aarp.org or 202-304-5782 for more information.

* Indicates that the law firm participates in the Raising the Bar Campaign.
2020 LEADERSHIP

LCE’s Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, and Young Lawyers Alliance provide guidance and leadership in the execution of our mission while helping raise our profile across the region. We are grateful for their service. Below is a listing of members as of December 31, 2020.

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WALTER WILLIAMS, Ombudsman Specialist
MARY ANN PARKER, Senior Legal Aid Attorney
OLGA RUIZ, Senior Operations Associate
AMOS THOMAS, Senior Administrative Associate

REVENUES

Contributions, Grants & Support .................. $66,333,465
In-Kind Contributions .................. $6,216,447
Investment Revenue & Losses (Net) .............. $2,373,034
Miscellaneous .....................................628

Total Revenues .......................... $74,923,574

EXPENSES

Program Services ................. $10,373,971
Management & General .............. $2,410,542
Resource Development ............... $155,400

Total Expenses ........................ $12,939,913

NET ASSETS*

Change in Net Assets ............... $61,983,661

Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year .......... $18,458,968

Net Assets at the End of the Year ............... $80,442,629

* Net assets include - The LCE Endowment Fund ($60,000,000); The Phillip Freedman Consumer Protection Fund ($5,861,393); The John R. Pickering Law Student Scholarship Fund ($483,276); and The Cheryl Polydor Fellowship Fund ($359,347).

In December 2020, AARP provided a $60 million gift to create a permanently restricted endowment at LCE. The intent of this endowment is to provide a stable funding source in support of LCE’s operations. These funds will produce investment income to replace funds that are contributed to LCE by AARP annually for LCE operating expenses. We anticipate that in 2025, when AARP discontinues its cash contribution to LCE, the investment income produced by this endowment will be sufficient to replace AARP’s annual contribution. Other than replacing AARP’s annual contribution beginning in 2025, the returns from this generous gift will have no impact on LCE’s annual operating budget.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
Do you know an older adult in DC who needs legal help? Suggest they call the LCE hotline: **202-434-2120**

*All calls are confidential.*

Residents of long-term care facilities and their family members in need of an advocate can contact the LCE Office of the DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman: **202-434-2190** | **DCOmbuds@aarp.org**

*All calls and emails are confidential.*

To partner with LCE and support our work please contact Billy Fettweis, Director of Development and Communications: **202-304-5782** | **wfettweis@aarp.org**

*LCE is an affiliate of AARP.*

Supported in part by

[Logo: Department of Aging and Community Living]