

# PAIR Project



**FOUNDED:** 1989  
**CURRENT ANNUAL BUDGET:** \$2,700,000  
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## Investment Opportunity

PAIR seeks an investment over the next three years to sustain critical community engagement work and increase its legal staff and pro bono attorney team, especially since this year, PAIR relied on approx. \$300,000 in federal funds, most of which terminated in August 2025; we will also be seeing at least 3 foundations sunset immigration-related funds. PAIR will use any new investment to sustain and expand its legal services, community education portfolio to help families prepare for interactions with ICE and develop new ways to support clients with asylee benefits.

Massachusetts' immigrant community is full of courageous individuals who have fled trauma and persecution with the vision of a fresh start. However, the resources required to navigate complex U.S. immigration law and secure asylum are expensive and hard to access. Free legal representation can mean the difference between a positive future and a return to danger.

Since 1989, PAIR (Political Asylum/Immigration Representation) Project has provided legal services to over 17,000 clients in their search for justice, hope, and safety. PAIR's clients live below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level, 98% of them are people of color, and are representatives of over 90 countries.

- Each year, PAIR recruits, trains, and mentors a network of over 1,500 pro bono lawyers to support over 1,700 clients.
- Asylum seekers with legal representation are four times more likely to win their case. In 2025, only 38% of total asylum cases filed with the Boston Asylum Office were approved; PAIR's success rate has stayed at 95% for over 10 years.
- While PAIR aims to serve as many immigrant clients in need, according to a Boston Bar Association study, legal service organizations turn away 50% of the eligible clients they meet due to lack of staff, tremendous backlog, and limited financial resources.

## Two-Year Goals

- Hire legal staff, including attorneys, with specializations in asylum law and other forms of humanitarian relief
- Grow network of volunteer attorneys by 150 new attorneys a year
- Expand community education efforts through "Know Your Rights" presentations across Massachusetts and access to PAIR
- Sustain recent growth (staff, program, volunteers, revenue) while maintaining high quality legal services

## Ways to Invest

### FINANCIAL

- \$100,000 to fund a staff attorney position
- \$70,000 fund to fund a paralegal position
- \$15,000 funds 40 work permit applications
- \$10,000 helps train 100 pro bono attorneys
- \$5,000 supports one family's efforts to reunite in the U.S.

### IN-KIND

- Pro bono attorney time
- Volunteer interpreters
- Client support services: language interpretation and local transportation
- Technology support
- Financial forecasting and development planning
- Executive coaching

## Leadership & Governance

Executive Director Anita P. Sharma has two decades of experience advocating for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. She co-chairs the Liaison Committee on Asylum for New England's chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, is a Council member of the Boston Bar Association, is a member of the MA Attorney General Office's Immigrant Advisory Council, and is a steering committee member of Boston Bar Association's Delivery of Legal Services section. From 2019-2023, Anita was a member of the Barr Foundation Fellowship group. Anita holds degrees in law and international legal studies.

PAIR is governed by a Board of Directors that includes former PAIR clients alongside experts in law and financial services.

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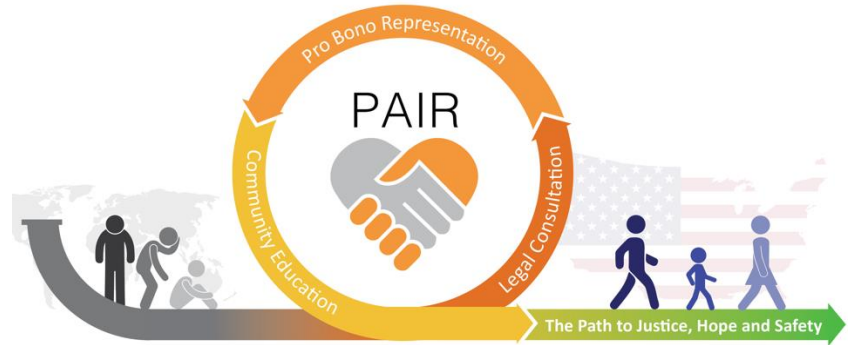
Because of you, I can  
write poems of freedom.  
I can believe in a future.  
An asylee is someone  
who can be born twice,  
like me; all thanks to  
you.

NANCY S., PAIR Client

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## PAIR'S MODEL



## OUR WORK

PAIR envisions a world where all asylum seekers have a right to legal counsel and can find justice, hope, and safety for themselves and their families in the U.S.

Unmet legal needs are the primary reasons asylum seekers are denied protection in the U.S. However, our immigration system is too opaque, expensive, and intimidating for the increasing number of vulnerable immigrants. There is no legal right to free counsel for immigration proceedings. PAIR partners with 1,500 active volunteer attorneys from over 50 of Boston's major law firms. PAIR recruits, trains, and mentors these corporate attorneys, most of whom do not have expertise in immigration law. These volunteers help PAIR maximize scarce internal legal resources while serving a substantial client base. In FY 23-24, PAIR's network of pro bono lawyers provided over 23,000 hours of donated legal services, worth a total of \$17M of in-kind donations.

**Pro Bono Asylum Program:** PAIR serves asylum seekers who have overcome unspeakable horrors to forge new lives in safety and freedom. PAIR's asylum program has assisted thousands of immigrants and has an astonishing success rate of over 95%.

**Detention Program:** PAIR is the only nonprofit in Massachusetts with negotiated access to provide legal orientation to immigrants detained by ICE. Detained immigrants are one of the most underserved populations, hidden from view with no right to free legal counsel. Detained immigrants are twice as likely to win relief with representation, making access to counsel vital.

**Justice for Immigrant Families Program:** Serves women and children fleeing persecution and violence and crossing through the U.S. southwest border, particularly individuals from Central America. Most of the clients in this program have suffered severe trauma and face language barriers.

**Community Outreach:** PAIR partners with fellow nonprofits, schools, and healthcare providers to bring "Know Your Rights" presentations to the public, including the immigrant community and greater Boston social service organizations. These presentations empower immigrants to understand and use their constitutional rights. Since December 2016, PAIR has reached over 21,000 community members.

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The diversity of our country is one of its greatest strengths. As lawyers, we have a unique ability to help individuals from other countries, who, often at great risk and sacrifice, make the commitment to live in the United States. PAIR provides the opportunity for us to provide that help.

ELIZABETH BURNETT

Partner, Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.

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#### Key Investors

- BARR FOUNDATION
- BOSTON BAR FOUNDATION
- THE BOSTON FOUNDATION
- CUMMINGS FOUNDATION
- MASSACHUSETTS BAR FOUNDATION
- MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORP
- THE SHAPIRO FOUNDATION
- UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTARY FUND FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

#### Partners

- BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER'S CENTER FOR REFUGEE HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS
- LOWELL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
- ROCA
- MINTZ, LEVIN, COHN, FERRIS, GLOVSKY AND POPEO, P.C.
- ROPES & GRAY LLP
- WILMERHALE

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO JUSTICE, HOPE, AND SAFETY

Asylees face uncertain futures, even after obtaining their status. Lack of access to housing, transportation, employment, education, healthcare, and childcare are significant barriers to ensuring a fresh start in the U.S. PAIR's holistic and empowering approach ensures that all clients have access to the services needed to support their next journey.

**Health and Well-Being in High Quality Legal Services:** PAIR's clients come to the U.S. having fled persecution and trauma. They lack basic resources, support systems, and access to the justice system. PAIR's holistic approach recognizes that clients need more than just asylum to ensure their health and well-being. PAIR partners with local health centers to provide counseling services and medical care for all family members.

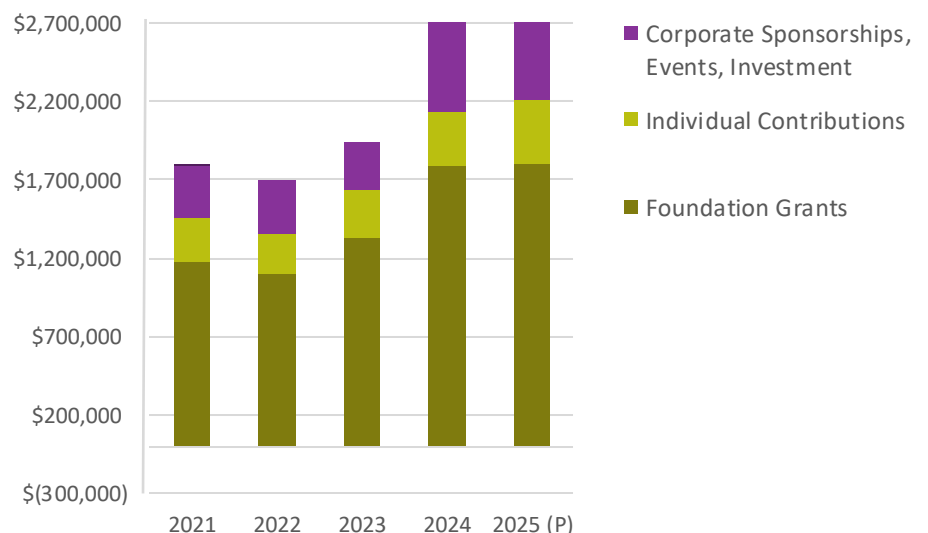
**Uniting Families:** Once they have been granted asylum, asylees can apply for derivative asylum for their spouse and children. This process allows families to leave dangerous places and reunite with their loved ones in the U.S. PAIR works with families to provide reunification support, including housing, transportation, and school enrollment.

**Path to Citizenship:** Research shows that a significant number of individuals who receive asylum become naturalized as U.S. citizens. PAIR urges clients to pursue citizenship as the ultimate security in creating a safe and healthy future. PAIR provides referrals to local agencies that offer pro bono support for clients with the citizenship process.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a result of sudden and harsh changes to immigration law and policy, as well as a surge in client needs, PAIR has seen tremendous growth in the last several years. In 2021, PAIR completed its most recent strategic plan, which charted an ambitious course for its future and the organization is on its way to achieving it.

### Revenue by Source





### Success Story: Octavio

Octavio fled Honduras because he was repeatedly harassed and physically assaulted due to his sexual orientation and his courageous work as a gay rights activist. He had formed a nonprofit dedicated to documenting information related to rights abuses within the gay community, such as police cruelty, maltreatment, and exploitation. Despite the risk, Octavio worked to protect the rights of the LGBT community. As a result, the police threatened physical harm if he didn't stop his activism. Scared for his life, Octavio came to the U.S. PAIR matched Octavio with volunteer attorney Orlando Lopez from Burns & Levinson. He won asylum in the U.S. and continues to advocate for LGBT rights. Octavio is now a U.S. citizen, a successful entrepreneur, member of the PAIR Board, and generous PAIR volunteer.



## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that PAIR will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary. Fiscal year is July-June.

	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025 (P)
<b>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE</b>			
Number of active cases	1,734	1,779	1,800
Number of asylum seekers intaked	111	155	155
Percent of eligible clients matched with pro bono attorneys	62%	72%	75%
Percent of clients granted asylee status	95%	95%	95%

## SOCIAL IMPACT

Through its extensive partnerships with leading law firms to recruit, train, and support pro bono attorneys, PAIR works to ensure that all eligible asylum seekers receive legal counsel and post-asylee supports.

Below are key internal and external indicators that provide evidence of PAIR's success in ensuring justice, hope, and safety for our most vulnerable immigrants.

INDICATOR	FY 2024
Number of clients served	1,779
"Know Your Rights" community presentations	486 Attendees 25 Presentations
Number of pro bono hours donated by legal partners	23,000
Percent of asylees who gain lawful permanent resident status (LPR)	90%
Percent of individuals with LPR status who become U.S. Citizens	70%
Impact of PAIR asylum seekers on economy due to PAIR's assistance with helping clients apply for a work permit	\$3,940,000 for 197 clients

## CHALLENGES TO PAIR'S WORK & COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE

We are experiencing a seismic shift in immigration law and policy in the U.S. Immigrant communities across the country are experiencing an assault on their legal rights and security, such as the attempt to ban refugees at U.S. borders, termination of humanitarian parole, stripping of asylum protections, and increased arrest and detention by ICE. The draconian changes have left immigrants in the U.S. in shock and despair, especially those detained by U.S. immigration officials.

It is critical to protect asylum seekers in the U.S., who are survivors of unimaginable torture and who often encounter seemingly insurmountable barriers to protection. PAIR is committed to filling a crucial gap in civil legal aid for immigrants and asylum seekers across Massachusetts, ensuring access to justice. Despite the extremely low asylum grant rate locally, PAIR's success rate with its asylum cases has stayed at 95% for over 15 years. In FY24, PAIR had the honor of helping **97 clients** win their immigration case and are now helping them with family reunification and their legal permanent residency process. With PAIR's help, these clients now have hope to rebuild their lives in the U.S. and reunite with family left behind in their home countries.