

# Kentucky Equal Justice Center

September 23, 2022

## Staff Report Highlights

### Food Justice — Tyler Offerman

**Kentucky Food Action Network:** We continue to work with the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, Community Farm Alliance, and Feeding KY to support the Kentucky Food Action Network (KFAN). KFAN recently wrapped up a 2-day Steering Committee Retreat and Full Member Summit. We welcomed three new Steering Committee members and had over 50 people in attendance at the Summit. KFAN also voted on their top 3 policy priorities for the year:

1. The Farm Bill
2. Food is Medicine
3. Administrative Advocacy: specifically around the SNAP Kynector program in CHFS and the implementation of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) by the Department of Agriculture

**Food is Medicine Consortium:** The Humana Foundation and Department of Agriculture are helping to convene meetings and conversations about how hospitals, MCOs, and doctors can utilize food and food prescriptions to address chronic illness or as a treatment plan post-op. KEJC is working to ensure that KFAN members are participating in these conversations, that voices of directly-impacted people are heard, and that outcomes are just.

**Collaborating with the Programs and SNAP Advocates:** KEJC has secured funding from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities to allow us to work with legal aid staff in the Welfare and Health Task Force to create training curriculum and facilitate trainings for the Programs on SNAP IPV hearings and appeals. This work will be done alongside and in conjunction with the launching of a Local SNAP Advocates program. We will work with Step-By-Step and the Kentucky Food Action Network to ensure that local community members—including SNAP beneficiaries—know about new options for SNAP enrollment, have their voices heard in implementation of the state SNAP Kynector program, know the process and their rights to appeal inaccurate SNAP determinations, and, with the assistance of the legal aid programs, build a network of support for community members who have had SNAP claims collections unjustly brought against them.

**ThriveKY Coalition Advocacy for Thriving Communities Roadshow Series:** KEJC is one of the host organizations for this 15-stop roadshow series. Tyler is anchoring the food and food assistance section.

## Maxwell Street Legal Clinic — Angela Evans

**Case statistics:** Maxwell Street case handlers have opened 41 cases since the July 14 KEJC board meeting. Of those, fifteen were DACA renewals, with three already approved. All told, Maxwell Street has 335 open and active cases.

**Transition:** In a surprise turn of events, Program Director Angela Evans will be leaving much sooner than expected to take on her new role as Fayette County Attorney. September 30<sup>th</sup> will be her last day. Michelle Haubner is taking over most of her caseload. Maxwell Street is now in need of practitioners, preferably attorneys, more than ever.

**VAWA petition approved:** At its August 24<sup>th</sup> staff meeting, Maxwell Street staff celebrated Allison's report that a client's VAWA petition was granted, allowing the client's family members (4 total) to receive an adjustment of status and obtain green cards!

**Law enforcement agreement:** Michelle finally received a long-awaited updated agreement from a prosecutor verifying that one of her clients was indeed a victim of a crime. She can now proceed with the VAWA petition.

**Tracking client fees:** Maxwell Street staff are finding new ways to utilize the program's immigration case management software, Cerenade, and now track client payments in the system—in addition to their regular receipt books—instead of in the paper client file that was sporadically used, at best.

**UK College of Law Intern:** Maxwell Street has a new law student intern for the Fall, Bethany Thompson. She is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at UK College of Law.

## Impact Litigation and Advocacy — Ben Carter

**Systems, Platforms, and Processes:** KEJC has incurred some [technical debt](#) over the years and it's affecting our ability to work together across offices and across cases. We're trying to start paying that technical debt off by investing significant time and energy in twice-a-week meetings with staff and additional meetings with vendors and partners to improve and systematize our:

- Case management system and practices
- Timetracking (for payroll, for cases, for lobbying, for billing funders)
- Project management, both internally (hiring, onboarding, performance review, task forces, grant applications and management) and externally (with advocacy, legal, and grassroots partners)

It is hard to make time for these meetings, conversations, investigations, experimentations when it takes time away from assisting clients, working with partner orgs or co-counsel on important issues, etc. However, this work is 1) overdue and 2) important, especially as KEJC 1) grows (!) and 2) implements its strategic plan. From:

- administering KEJC's website to
- building our email list(s) of directly impacted Kentuckians and their allies to
- advertising, hiring and onboarding new staff to

- Seeing and supporting (here, I am trying to avoid the word “supervision”) staff members’ work to
- improving the systems we use to work remotely together to
- improving intake processes across KEJC (while exhausting, this list is not exhaustive)

this “process” work is directly relevant to both the work identified in our strategic plan to

- deepen our multi-function advocacy model to serve legal aid programs, our policy partners, and grassroots organizations more effectively and
- prepare for a time when our next Director is not primarily responsible for or involved in these activities (succession planning).

**Staffing needs and updates:** KEJC staff have expressed the need for 1) a FT back-office staff member and 2) a FT Communications Director. Lack of support and capacity in these areas is affecting KEJC’s work internally and effectiveness in the community. I urge the Board to actively engage with staff to understand and meet these critical needs at KEJC.

- Housing Justice Attorney: HIRED!
  - Stefanie Kingsley joins us later this month.
  - Still to do: Eviction Outreach Lead, Outreach Worker, grant management decisions, Memorandum of Agreement with LSC programs
- Health Justice Attorney: SOON!
  - When hired, I would expect the Health Justice Attorney to be the staff member primarily responsible for guiding KEJC’s work with the [Protect Kentucky Access](#) campaign. This is the coalition of organizations (including allies like ACLU-KY, Kentucky Health Justice Network, and the Fairness Campaign) that are working to defeat Amendment 2 on the ballot this November. Amendment 2 would amend Kentucky’s Constitution to ban abortion care in Kentucky.
  - (In addition to all of the various other areas of work we expect from our Health Law Fellows.)

## **Resource Organizer — Raaziq El-Amin**

**Donor Management System:** Raaziq has led the conversion process to our new donor management system, Bloomerang. It's turning out to be a useful tool. Raaziq recently created some email templates in the system so that we can create and share newsletters using Bloomerang instead of Constant Contact. Now, he’s working on setting up the donation page that will go on the website. After that, Raaziq will help recurring donors transition to the new system.

### **EOY Giving**

Raaziq has been planning donor outreach for the end of year (EOY) giving season. September has involved pulling reports and identifying trends. October will focus on implementing the outreach plan based on these trends. Thanking KEJC supporters and showing them the impact of

their partnership is the name of the game for November. December is all about solicitation. Raaziq is identifying ways to follow up with anyone who pledged a gift or who normally gives but hasn't already followed through. There will be a variety of ways for board members to get involved, so please stay tuned. Please don't hesitate to reach out to Raaziq if you want to know how you can help implement the EOY plan!

## **Outreach — Miranda Brown**

### **Networking/Outreach/Communications**

- **Outreach:** KEJC staff spoke directly with about 200 people, either by meeting them at the New Life Day Center, the Fayette County Public Schools Student Support Professionals Institute, the Winburn Back to School Rally, or in person meetings with partners, or virtual meetings and presentations. Some unique occasions this quarter were lunch-and-learns with staff of HealthFirst BlueGrass and a training with United HealthCare staff.

### **Direct Service**

- **Lexington Wage Claim Clinic:** We assisted 6 wage claimants with demand letters, ES-8 wage and hour complaint forms, advice, and accompaniment. This week, we held our final wage claim clinic for the year. We continue to wrap up existing wage claim cases, seek co-counsel for cases, and seek funding to maintain our Worker Rights Project beyond 2022.
- **Health Coverage Enrollment Assistance:** Miranda helped three new individuals and families with health coverage in addition to previous clients.

### **Advocacy Feedback Loop**

- **Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange (KHBE):** Miranda serves on KHBE's recently revived Education and Outreach Subcommittee. During the last quarter, she participated in several workshops to provide input on new health insurance literacy materials, "kynect to Care" booklets and accompanying community-directed presentations modeled after the federal CMS "Coverage to Care" materials. Examples of content that we contributed to include a consumer guide for when to visit the Emergency Department or an Urgent Treatment Center and other cost saving tips for utilizing health insurance.
- **Consumer Rights & Client Needs Technical Advisory Committee:** Miranda serves on this committee, which requested DMS to release a one-page consumer-directed memo explaining network adequacy rules, consumers' rights, and how to change Medicaid MCO (Managed Care Organization). DMS has since created a draft and we provided feedback to clarify information and make it easier to read and understand.
- **Notice Improvement:** While this project wrapped up in June, in July, the new Division for Health Plan Oversight tapped us for a new notice improvement task: reviewing an Outreach Notice and Emergency Medicaid Fact Sheet to notify Emergency Medicaid members of the upcoming changes allowing them to pre-enroll for 12 months of emergency coverage.

- **Advocacy partnerships:** Our team met with La Casita Center, Kentucky Youth Lawyers Project, and Clean Slate Centers to discuss health coverage enrollment issues, referrals, and reaching community members with up to date information on health coverage and worker rights.