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I am in awe of [my clients'] strength, resilience, and hopefulness...My *pro bono* work is truly the most important and rewarding thing I have done as a lawyer, and I enjoy my regular work. I am so grateful to ILAP for providing me the training and support to be able to do this work.

-ILAP Pro Bono Panel Member

Asylum Program

Ongoing attacks and unpredictable changes have decimated the U.S. asylum system, but ILAP is committed to helping as many people as possible make their rightful claims and find safety from persecution. Our Asylum Program reaches more than 1,000 Mainers each year, including through representation by our dedicated Pro Bono Panel members, community workshops, and more.

ILAP has been part of the network of people and organizations welcoming asylum seekers to Maine since our founding in 1993. Over the last decade the number of asylum seekers in Maine has grown significantly, from a couple of dozen individuals per year to more than 4,000 at most recent estimates. **The process for seeking asylum is complicated and an asylum seeker is more likely to be granted this form of protection if they are represented by a good lawyer who understands the system.**

ILAP provides full representation to individuals seeking asylum by placing their case with a lawyer from our *Pro Bono* Panel. These volunteer attorneys help clients submit their application for asylum, prepare for their interview with an Asylum Officer and, when necessary, present their case in a hearing before an immigration judge. Each year, the Panel donates over 3,500 hours of their time and expertise to represent nearly 200 asylum seekers.

Recently, the Panel has helped a father from Rwanda win permanent residency, secured asylum for a

family from Gabon, and advocated fearlessly for an immigrant detained at the height of the pandemic, among other legal victories.

Ongoing attacks and unpredictable changes to the asylum system have created even more uncertainty. To provide legal guidance and support to as many people as possible, we expanded assistance for people applying for asylum without an attorney, including offering consultations, a comprehensive workshop series, and translated online self-help resources.

This work is relentless and the need is often greater than what ILAP can provide. **We will continue our work to provide legal services to asylum seekers to help them find safety from persecution while advocating to create a better, more equitable system.**

