

Legal Services of Greater Miami Receives \$600k Grant from Wells Fargo to Improve Housing Stability in South Florida

Grant funds support free legal assistance services to mitigate evictions and help people stay in their homes.

MIAMI, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, April 20, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Legal Services of Greater Miami (Legal Services) has received a \$600,000 grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation to help provide free legal assistance to more low-income tenants and homeowners in Miami.



The donation supports two efforts that address local housing issues by providing free legal assistance and representation to: low-income renters in Miami who are at risk of eviction and heirs' property owners facing tangled titles and loss of generational land and property.



At Wells Fargo, we believe everyone should have access to a quality, affordable home and opportunities for creating generational wealth through homeownership."

Wells Fargo Vice President of Mortgage Sustainability Rulon Washington

A 2020 [study prepared by the University of Florida Shimberg Center](#) for Housing Studies found that in Miami-Dade County, 65 percent of renter households are cost burdened, with alarming percentages of cost-burdened households in lower income levels. According to [an analysis made by the Community Justice Project](#), at least 19,655 evictions were filed in Miami-Dade in 2022. Last summer, the U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development Marcia L. Fudge declared Miami "the epicenter of the housing crisis."

Legal representation for tenants facing the fast-paced, complex process of an eviction plays a huge role in protecting their rights and prevents many of the long-term effects of eviction. Without legal representation, most tenants end up losing their eviction cases, which usually means they lose their home, incur debt, and have an eviction on their record which makes it harder to secure housing. In addition to displacing families from their homes, evictions are

shown to have lasting negative effects on mental and physical health, family unity and economic well-being, which lead to devastating effects on entire communities and cities. With the escalating housing crisis and the urgent need to keep families stably housed, access to high-quality free legal assistance is essential to prevent evictions, avoid homelessness and preserve affordable rental homes.

With past and current Wells Fargo support, the Legal Services team has worked to meet the high demand in this area and has assisted over a thousand tenants and families at risk of eviction. These services enable many tenants to either remain in their homes or obtain successful resolutions to agree on move out dates and avoid judgments, both of which ensure great housing stability.

“At Wells Fargo, we believe everyone should have access to a quality, affordable home and opportunities for creating generational wealth through homeownership, said Wells Fargo Vice President of Mortgage Sustainability Rulon Washington. “We are proud to provide this important grant to Legal Services to help more families across Miami find the services they need to stay in their homes and address systems that often lead to loss of property, land, and wealth for families of color.”

Legal Services is working to promote housing stability for families under the most difficult circumstances. In one case, Legal Services successfully prevented the eviction of a family of six where the landlord improperly charged thousands in additional fees and filed both an eviction and a small claims case against the tenant. As a result of their advocacy, this family remained in their home through the completion of the school year to ensure there was no disruption to their child’s education, incurred no debt as part of the global settlement, and was provided sufficient time to find a new home.

The additional funding from Wells Fargo will protect homeowners in heirs’ property matters. Heirs’ property generally refers to family-owned property inherited by multiple generations without formal legal proceedings, resulting in the lack of a clear title that proves ownership. This Wells Fargo grant will allow Legal Services to provide legal assistance, estate planning and asset education to low-income homeowners so they can solve and avoid these issues. To secure and preserve homeownership is a direct way to create intergenerational wealth among low-income families, while preventing predatory development and preserving the unique heritage of historical neighborhoods. Leveraging homeownership as a tool to build intergenerational wealth is particularly effective in the South Florida real estate market.

This is an exciting opportunity to have greater impact as it is a new project and area of concentration for Legal Services. At present, the Legal Services team is conducting extensive outreach to the community to raise awareness on these issues and the availability of services.

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