LAST PRISONER PROJECT 2020

ANNUAL REPORT

LAST PRISONER PROJECT

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been a difficult year, to say the least.

Between a global public health crisis, unprecedented levels of political polarization, and the continued tenacity of racism and xenophobia, optimism has been in short supply.

And while we enter 2021 with hope, it's undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unimaginable level of loss of life, fueled economic inequality, and underscored the injustices and inequities that continue to plague our nation.

These hardships have been particularly acute for our constituents who — in large part due to the needless, discriminatory machinations of our country's criminal legal system — continue to languish behind bars as COVID-19 runs rampant through our country's jails and prisons.

Despite these difficulties, LPP achieved many monumental accomplishments in its first full year of operations, and the events of 2020 have only bolstered our resolve to fight against the injustice that is cannabis incarceration. I'm both humbled and deeply proud of the work our small team, in collaboration with numerous partners and fellow advocates, has engaged in over the past twelve months.

For us, "full freedom" isn't just a tagline or a lofty aspiration, it's a calling we work towards tirelessly every single day. To that end, I cannot overstate how important your support has been in furthering that goal. Your dedication to the LPP mission has made a difference in the lives of so many people.

And for that, I am eternally grateful.

SARAH GERSTEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND GENERAL COUNSEL

MEET THE TEAM

Over the past year we've scaled our team from two to seven staff members. This growth has enabled us to expand the reach of our direct service programs and more meaningfully engage in policy reform at the local, state, and federal level.

Mary Bailey
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Mikelina Belaineh
DIRECTOR OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Craig Cesal
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Mariah Daly
LEGAL FELLOW

Sarah Gersten
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND GENERAL COUNSEL

Evelyn LaChapelle
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Natalie Papillion
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

MEET THE BOARD

We've also spent the past year building out a board with a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.

ANDREW DEANGELO

ERIK MURRAY

NATALIE PAPILLION

DEAN RAISE

TAHIRA REHMATULLAH

ADVISORY BOARD

JIM BELUSHI
CORVAIN COOPER
DAN DALTON
STEVE DEANGELO
NABIL ELDERKIN
MELISSA ETHERIDGE
MATT GRAY
DENNIS HUNTER
NIAMBE MCINTOSH
ROBERT LAURIE
DAMIAN MARLEY
STEPHEN MARLEY
ERIC RACHMANY
TAHIRA REHMATULLAH
STEPHANIE SHEPARD
ZOE WILDER

LEGAL COMMITTEE

BETH CURTIS
JENNIFER FISHER
DAVID HOLLAND
CHIARA JUSTER
MANNY MEDRANO
GARY WEINSTEIN

OUR IMPACT

In just our first full year of operations, LPP implemented direct services in five states, engaged in legislative advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels, developed our reentry resources, and published impactful scholarship.

We also quickly pivoted our direct service approach to respond to the immediate needs facing our constituents amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time we also built out and diversified our team, and developed critical infrastructure to optimize our programs for impact and sustainability.

200,000+ OUR MICHAEL THOMPSON CAMPAIGN SAW SUPPORTERS CONTACT MICHIGAN OFFICIALS OVER 200,000 TIMES

OUR TEAM GREW **3X** BRINGING LPP TO 7 FULL-TIME STAFFERS

OUR ROLL IT UP FOR JUSTICE PROGRAM EXPANDED FROM 3 to 22 DISPENSARY PARTNERS **+633%**

1500+ LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS, INCLUDING FORBES, BLOOMBERG, CBS, AND VARIETY, HIGHLIGHTED OUR WORK MORE THAN 1,500 TIMES.

OUR MORE ACT CAMPAIGN SAW LPP STAFF CONNECT WITH MORE THAN 2/3 OF CONGRESS TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE. **500+**

CANNABIS CLEMENCY PROGRAM

In 2020, through the Cannabis Clemency Program LPP, in partnership with local and national criminal justice organizations, began organizing a national pro bono effort to assist those incarcerated for cannabis offenses, who generally have no other avenues of relief than executive clemency.

The focus of the Cannabis Clemency Project was initially on the state level, where most individuals incarcerated for cannabis crimes are held.

> **Last Prisoner Project was sent from heaven to help me. LPP brought light back to my life.**
>
> **I look around my house everyday and think that if it weren't for them, I wouldn't be here today.**

– MICHAEL THOMPSON
CANNABIS CLEMENCY PROGRAM
CONSTITUENT (MI)

CANNABIS CLEMENCY PROGRAM

> ***I spent 32 years incarcerated for a nonviolent cannabis charge. I would still be in prison today without the help that I received from Last Prisoner Project.***
>
> ***Thanks to them I am reunited with my family and enjoying my freedom.***

— RICHARD DELISI
CLEMENCY CONSTITUENT (FL)

Through the Cannabis Clemency Program, LPP advocates for broad clemency programs in individual states, and pairs eligible individuals with pro bono lawyers that work to secure their grants.

In 2020, we also began working directly with the White House and the Office of American Innovation to advocate for the release of federal cannabis prisoners. These efforts saw LPP assist the newly-formed federal clemency committee to develop eligibility criteria for individuals in federal custody.

We also worked with our partners at the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers to co-sponsor four federal clemency petitions as a part of NACDL's Trial Penalty Clemency Project.

ANDY COX
COMPASSIONATE RELEASE RECIPIENT

COMPASSIONATE RELEASE PROGRAM

LPP is currently leading a new initiative, catalyzed by the COVD-19 crisis, focused on advocating for the release of cannabis offenders via filing motions for Compassionate Release (authorized by the First Step Act).

Overcrowded, unhygienic, and under-resourced—to be incarcerated in the United States is dangerous, even under normal circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these health and safety-related deficiencies, After all, more often than not, incarcerated people have no ability to safely self-isolate, and are left with little access to quality, desperately-needed medical care. These mental and physical risks are particularly acute for vulnerable populations with pre-existing health conditions.

Given many individuals confined in these inhumane conditions have been found to pose no demonstrated threat to society, the COVID-19 crisis catalyzed a groundswell of advocacy for their 'compassionate release'.

In 2020, LPP and partners, including the Goodwin, Vicente Sederbeg, and Zuber Lawler law firms, developed a litigation strategy aimed at facilitating the release of those most vulnerable to incarceration-attributable deaths. The project has seen LPP match at-risk individuals with pro bono attorneys that file motions of compassionate relief on our constituent's behalf.

In addition to this intake and referral process, LPP provides attorneys with a toolkit that includes templatized briefs that can be easily adapted for each individual filing. We're creating scalable impact by providing legal arguments that justify the release of our constituents, as well as using these individual cases to advance more effective and humane public health policies and criminal justice reforms.

REBUILDING FAMILIES

A portion of LPP's funding goes directly to recently released constituents to assist in their reentry, as well as to the families of our currently incarcerated constituents who are particularly in need of financial assistance.

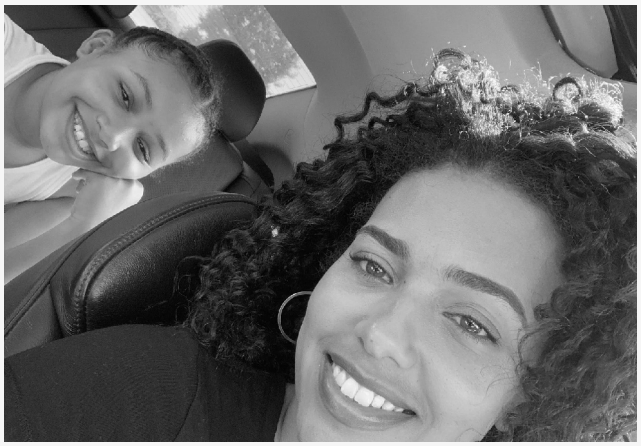
+$195,000

Funds dispersed in 2020 in grant funding to constituents through our support fund.

Fate and Faith Winslow

When Faith Winslow was nine years old, her father, Fate, was sentenced to life imprisonment in Louisiana for selling $20 worth of cannabis to an undercover informant. Mercifully, Fate was resentenced at the end of 2020.

Faith was overjoyed to finally have the opportunity to reconnect with her father, but unfortunately, a car wreck left her struggling to find transportation. Fortunately, LPP was able to help Faith purchase a new car. Thanks to your generosity, Faith can now travel to visit her father and work to regain the time lost after 12 years.



Venise and Evelyn LaChapelle

Venise's life was devastated when her mother, Evelyn, was sentenced to 87 months in prison for depositing funds from cannabis sales into her bank account. The then 3-year-old Venise would spend the next seven years without her mom. Thankfully, Evelyn was released in 2019 and is now rebuilding her life and her family.

Thanks to LPP's support fund, Evelyn is able to pay Venise's tuition payments. Now in fifth grade, Venise hopes to get back to karate and piano lessons when she matriculates to middle school next year. She aspires to then attend a performing arts high school.

Cleer, Scotlyn & Corvain Cooper

After serving eight years of a life sentence for distributing cannabis, Corvain Cooper was granted clemency in January 2021 and reunited with his two young daughters, Cleer and Scotlyn. With the financial assistance from LPP during his incarceration, Corvain has been able to provide his daughters with the resources they need to pursue their education.

Cleer is interested in majoring in either fashion or law, while Scotlyn, who shares her Dad's entrepreneurial spirit, aspires for a career in business. In fact, she's already started her own hair accessories e-commerce site.

PRISON TO PROSPERITY

In 2020, we put efforts towards building an infrastructure to connect impacted constituents to work opportunities in the industry. LPP piloted a program to match constituents to recruiters who would advocate on their behalf to industry clients. In that effort, we encountered various barriers and challenges to meaningful implementation that caused us to pause and pivot towards structuring ourselves as a resource for re-entry constituents rather than a programs and services provider.

In working to secure employment opportunities, we realized that for our constituents to meaningfully access these opportunities—there were other, more immediate, basic needs that needed to be met. Recognizing these critical needs and the dearth of direct financial assistance for system-impacted individuals, LPP saw an opportunity to immediately fill an important gap.

Our hope is that through our resources program, in conjunction with policy reform, public/industry education and awareness campaigns around Fair Chance Hiring and the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for system impacted individuals— a pipeline from incarceration to employment in the industry will be more feasible to build, implement, and scale.

"Two years ago I was unsure of where my life was headed. Fresh out of federal prison, working a low wage job and feeling as if I was in a whole new world, a world that had changed so much while I served a 10 year sentence for marijuana. The weight of feeling as if my best days were behind me was a heavy burden to carry until I was introduced to Last Prisoner Project.

Feeling validated by now being a part of helping bring awareness to the plight of those still suffering from unjust laws with LPP has helped lift some of that weight."

– STEPHANIE SHEPARD
LPP ADVISOR AND REENTRY CONSTITUENT

COVID-19 RESPONSE

As the coronavirus began its spread, LPP recognized the dire situation this would create for our incarcerated constituents. We immediately started working on advocacy efforts to decarcerate jails and prisons as well as direct service programs aimed at mitigating the spread of the virus in correctional facilities.

Our Efforts

- The creation and implementation of our compassionate release program;
- Broad advocacy and awareness efforts highlighting the plight of at-risk incarcerated individuals and the urgent need to depopulate correctional facilities;
- Establishment of a fund to contribute directly to our constituents' commissary accounts;
- Additional funding for medical care, cleaning, hygienic products, and phone calls or smart visitation during suspended visitation;
- Facilitation of donations of masks, sanitizer, and other hygienic supplies to correctional facilities in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Colorado, as well as to impacted communities in Los Angeles, in coordination with our community partners.

POLICY REFORM

Over the past year LPP has worked closely with state and local lawmakers and other advocacy groups to reform cannabis and criminal justice laws across the country.

LEGALIZATION

In states like **Connecticut** and **New York**, LPP advocated for legalization that would include provisions for criminal justice reform, social equity, and creating pathways to employment for justice-impacted community members.

CLEAN SLATE

LPP worked on several record clearing and expungement initiatives including in **Maryland** and **Colorado**. We urged lawmakers to implement *automatic expungement* laws, ensuring that we are eliminating barriers to these much needed relief measures.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

In conjunction with our reentry program, LPP fought to ensure that those with criminal records are not barred from participating in the industry, as employees or operators.

EXPANDING RELEASE

As part of our clemency efforts we advocated governors' offices across the country to implement programs to release cannabis offenders, particularly in states with a legal industry or where these same offenses have been decriminalized.

IMPACT LITIGATION

We filed an amicus brief on behalf of the petitioners in a landmark petition for certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court, demanding that the federal statute criminalizing marijuana, the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), be declared unconstitutional.

In September 2020, LPP filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *Washington v. Barr*. The case called on the Supreme Court to declare the current scheduling of cannabis unconstitutional.

Currently, the Controlled Substances Act lists cannabis as a Schedule I drug, defined as "a drug with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse."

The amicus brief, which was catalyzed by a petition first filed by former NFL player and medical marijuana patient Marvin Washington, contended that this federal regulation blocks access to lifesaving medication and as such, should be considered unconstitutional.

Gary Weinstein, Matthew Donohue, and Eli Scheiman of Porzio Law represented LPP pro bono on this filing. Their efforts were supported by LPP staff, including Sarah Gersten, Mikelina Belaineh, Mariah Daly, and legal intern Kiersten Yamamoto.

Other amici that filed in support of the petitioners include several prominent advocacy organizations and seven members of the United States Congress.

As the brief notes, LPP's work is grounded in data-driven studies demonstrating that the criminalization of marijuana has led to racial disparities in the justice system. The over-policing of low-income and minority neighborhoods, and the disproportionate social, economic, and civil disenfranchisement of communities of color are intertwined with a national policy of federal marijuana illegality.

De-scheduling marijuana is critical to ensuring that all Americans are able to obtain safe and effective medical treatment without fear they will be saddled with the devastating consequences of criminal or civil sanctions.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Last Prisoner Project's landmark new study details marijuana's evolution from popular medicine to handmaid of police brutality and mass incarceration.

The paper calls upon politicians, policymakers, and the general public to make their voices heard and demand just, effective, and common-sense cannabis policy reforms.

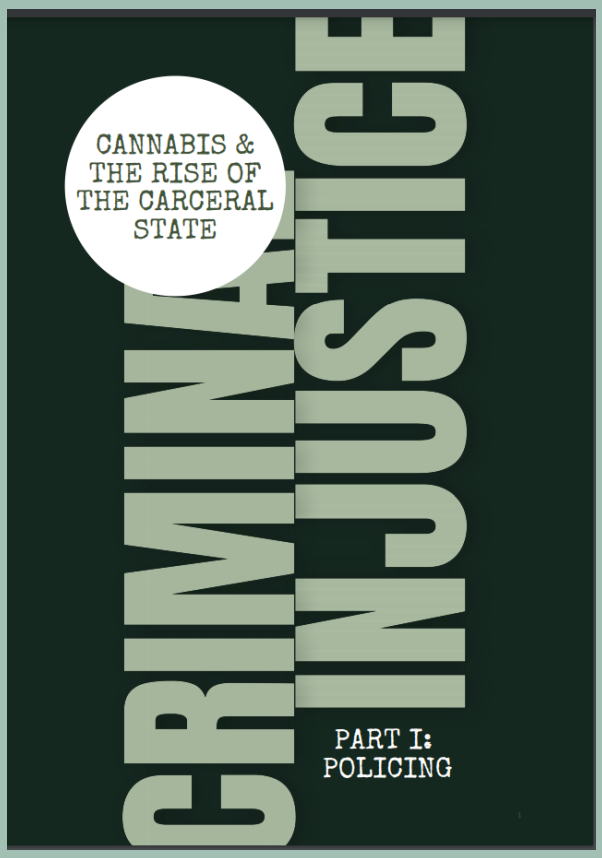
The report's authors call for an end to federal marijuana prohibition, and provide detailed policy recommendations for local, state, tribal, and federal governments working to create a more just, effective, and pragmatic approach to marijuana policy.

As the study notes: "As Americans, we believe in the importance of liberty, opportunity and equal justice under the law. Our ineffective and unjust policy of marijuana prohibition doesn't just fail to live up to these values — it actively undermines them.

Criminalizing people who use marijuana needlessly entangles millions of people in the criminal legal system each year at a tremendous societal cost," Papillion added. "Taking a common-sense approach to cannabis policy will help combat injustice, protect our freedoms and ensure the health, security and prosperity of all American communities."

> ***As headline after headline and data point after data point demonstrate, the War on Drugs has always really been a War on People. And more specifically, a war on Black and brown people.***

– NATALIE PAPILLION
AUTHOR OF CRIMINAL INJUSTICE
LPP DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

In 2020, LPP launched numerous advocacy and awareness campaigns designed to garner grassroots support for initiatives varying from support for federal cannabis legislation, prisoner releases, and decarcerating correctional facilities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

LPP also implemented the second year of our letter writing campaign, and in total had over 2,500 letters sent to our incarcerated constituents during the holiday season.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are eternally grateful for each and every one of our supporters that enables us to do this work through donations of any amount. Your generosity enables us to achieve our mission, and to keep fighting until the last cannabis prisoner is free.

Partners for Freedom

Champions
Ascend Wellness
Green Thumb Industries
Harborside

Reformers
Weedmaps
Nature's Grace & Wellness
Leafly
Trulieve
Copperstate Farms
The Scott's Miracle-Gro Foundation
GRAV

Advocates
Dosist
CannaCraft
Kandy Pens
Pax
Wurk
Garden Remedies
Playboy
Happy Valley
Canna Provisions

Supporters
Ocean Grown Extracts
Grow Flow
Kiva
Cured
Wana
Pleasantrees
Skymint
Sho Companies
Chalice Farms
1906
Magical
Island
ALT
Oak Impact Group
Verde Natural
Napa Valley Fume
Cannabiz Team

Supporters
Be Green Supply
Potency
Euphoric Life
PufCreative
Design Kush
Vangst
Farmer & the Felon
C3 Management
Press Here Publicity
SCS Global Services
Hoban Law Group
Kikoko
Sunday Goods
Pure Beauty
Ooze
Evidence
House of Wise
Cannalysis
WheresWeed.com
Uncle Ike's
Cresco Labs
Feals
Edie Parker
GrowHealthy
PayQwick
Mission
CLISCS
Carolina Hemp Company
Justice Joints
GKUA
Greenlane
Slix
CARP
CBD Choice
Magic Number
Mojo
Jupiter Research
Rebel Spirit
PuffCo
K Savage Supply
Dr. Bronners
Sovereignty

Roll It Up For Justice

Arizona:
Sol Flower

California:
Harborside
Solful
Medithrive
Kannabis Works
Treehouse
Canna Junction

Colorado:
Everbloom
Verde Natural

Florida:
Grow Healthy
Miracle Leaf

Hawaii:
Noa Botanicals

Illinois:
Ascend
Sunnyside
MOCA

Indiana:
IndyCBD

Louisiana:
Louisiana Harvest

Maryland:
Dots Dispensary

Massachusetts:
Canna Provisions
Garden Remedies
Northeast Alternatives
Mayflower Medicinals
Diem
Bask

New Mexico:
Organitica

North Carolina:
Carolina Hemp Company
Brevard Hemp
Asheville Dispensary

Oklahoma:
Pharm Aide Pharms
Canna Stop
Kanna Kures

Oregon:
Oregon's Finest
Curaleaf

Tennessee:
LabCanna

Texas:
Hummingbird Hemp
Tribe

Utah:
Dragonfly Wellness

Vermont:
Southern Vermont Wellness
Ceres

Washington:
Uncle Ike's
Hashtag Cannabis

Digital Retailers:
GRAV
Ooze
Dad Grass
Sesh Pack
Reform Wellness
Milkmen
Emjay
Mima Remedies

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIALS

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

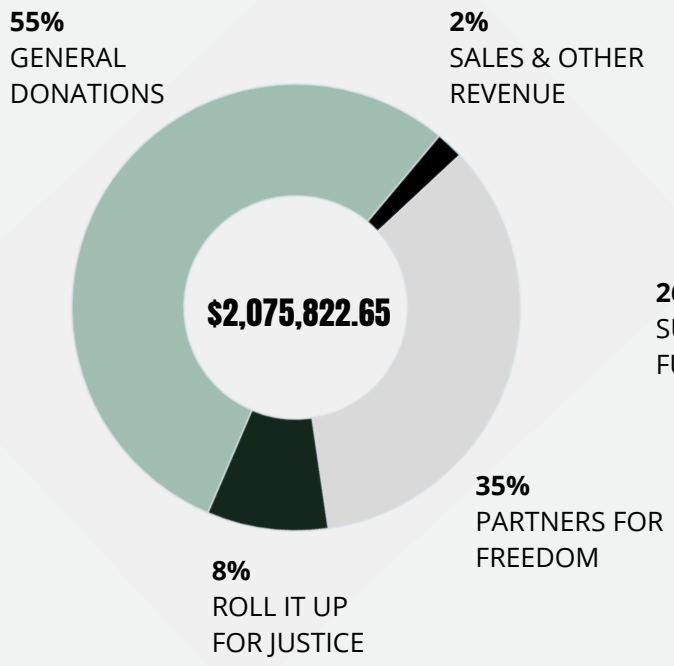
GENERAL DONATIONS: $1,134,071.89
PARTNERS FOR FREEDOM: $719,192.77
ROLL IT UP FOR JUSTICE: $181,363.79
SALES AND OTHER REVENUE: $41,194.20

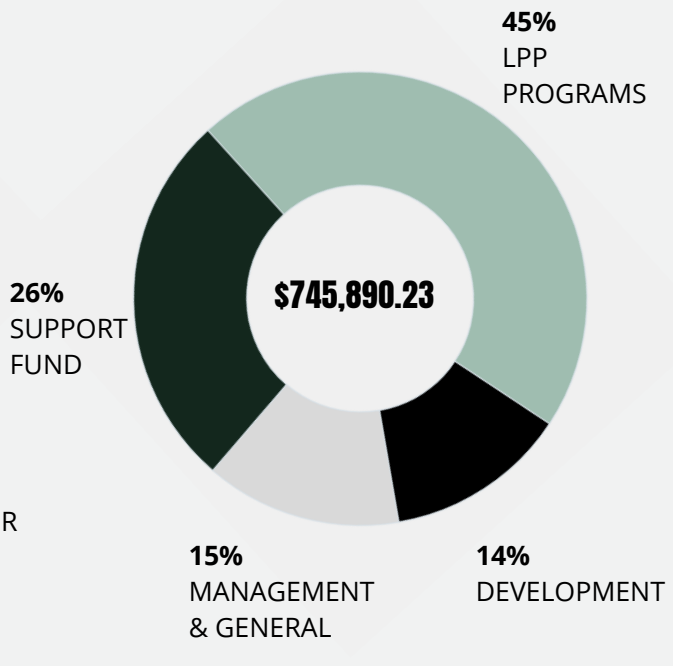
TOTAL: $2,075,822.65

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES: $333,106.40
SUPPORT FUND: $195,706.88
MANAGEMENT & GENERAL: $111,990.41
DEVELOPMENT: $105,086.54

TOTAL: $745,890.23





*Partners for Freedom is our corporate sponsorship program.
Roll It Up For Justice is a program that enables consumers to donate their spare change to LPP at retail stores.

LAST PRISONER PROJECT

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