

## 2021 Legislative Update

2021 marked Legal Action Chicago's inaugural legislative session. We used this session to lay the groundwork for critical advocacy in the future, and we are proud to have supported our partners and several critical proposals to improve the lives of people experiencing poverty and inequity. Some of our priority areas include:

- **Consumer Protections:** Legal Action Chicago introduced HB2771 in the 2021 legislative session, which would increase the personal property exemptions in debt collection to better protect struggling families. Illinois's protections for family finances have [received a "D" rating](#) from the National Consumer Law Center. Especially in the wake of the pandemic, which impacted so many, Illinois needs robust consumer protections to ensure Illinois families can thrive. This work will continue in future sessions.
- **Housing:** We introduced SB 1559, which would eliminate existing provisions of the Eviction Act that allow landlords unfettered ability to bar tenant guests, unjustly restricting tenants' ability to care for their families, build deep relationships, and arrange for child-care. We see first-hand the unintended consequences—and disparate impact on families of color—of this unlimited discretion. We will be returning to advance this legislation next session.
- **Family Law:** Legal Action Chicago partnered with the Illinois State Bar Association and domestic violence attorneys to address a well-intentioned, but problematic, amendment to the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act (HB861). The amendment—aimed at helping survivors of violence—would have had unintended negative consequences for low-income domestic violence victims in divorce cases. Our legal services expertise was critically important to explain why and how the proposed legislation would do more harm than good.
- **Protecting Workers:** Legal Action Chicago supported legislation, advanced by the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC), to address the limited accountability for the agriculture industry when farm workers are sprayed with pesticides in the field. The legislation was inspired by litigation brought by ELPC and Legal Aid Chicago. In future sessions, we are committed to ensuring Illinois's system of accountability reflects the realities and risks of agricultural work.

Legal Action Chicago also supported important initiatives led by our partners, including these critical pieces of legislation that passed in 2021:

- HB 2887: COVID-19 emergency housing relief
- HB 88: Removing the ban that prevented low-income parents with a drug felony conviction from receiving TANF cash assistance
- HB 1063: Repealing the statutory provision that criminalized transmission of HIV

Finally, Legal Action Chicago supported key investments in the state budget, including additional resources for violence prevention and legal services. We are committed to working to help ensure Illinois's budget supports robust programs and services that meet the needs of people experiencing poverty and injustice.