

May Newsletter: Advocacy Highlights



**Los Angeles
Center for
Law and Justice**

May Newsletter

Dear LACLJ Supporters,

What I am most proud of at LACLJ is the impact of our services and the passion with which our team fights for survivors. That passion unfolds not only when a survivor's legal team appears in a courtroom, but also behind the scenes through organizing, testifying, and systems-wide advocacy to improve access to justice for survivors.

This month, I am honored to share some of our most recent advocacy highlights and the amazing staff leading the community in support of survivors.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norayma Cabot', written in a cursive style.

Norayma Cabot
Executive Director



STATEWIDE EQUAL ACCESS IN CO

In March 2021, LACLJ Directing Attorney of Immigration, Michelle Carey, was invited to testify before the House Judiciary at the Colorado State Legislature on behalf of a statewide U Visa Certification bill, HB21-1060. The bill would ensure that all immigrant survivors across the state had equal access to the certification required to apply for a U Visa.

Previously survivors' access to U Visa certification varied greatly, depending on the county in Colorado where the criminal activity took place. Some had access to timely certifications and others were arbitrarily denied, resulting in inequities that left many survivors without access to U Visa Certification, despite otherwise qualifying for U Visa relief.

Michelle had been instrumental in advocating for California's own U Visa Certification bill, SB 674 which went into effect in 2016. Thanks to her continued advocacy, Colorado recently passed their bill which will go into effect later this year. Now, all immigrant survivors have access to a more fair and robust U Visa Certification process, creating equity for survivors across the entire state of Colorado.



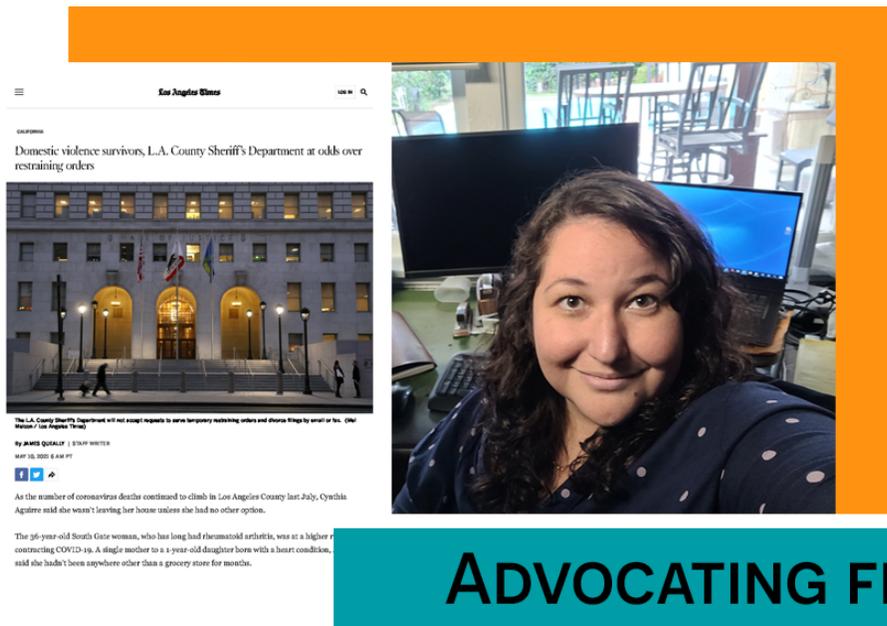
STATE POLICY ADVOCAY DAY

LACLJ staff members (Rachelle Neskes, Amanda Jancu, Paxcely Marquez and Yesenia Acosta) participated in the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's (CPEDV)

Policy Advocacy Day this month. They met with several state officials, including State Senator Bob Archuleta, State Senator Susan Rubio, and the office of State Assemblymember Lisa Calderon.

Sharing their experiences providing direct services to survivors, LACLJ attorneys and advocates brought important issues to the discussion, such as the impact of COVID-19 on survivors, ongoing domestic and sexual violence prevention funding, and the impact of an abusive partner's debts on a survivor's ability to establish their economic dependence.

Thank you to CPEDV for organizing a successful Policy Advocacy Day!



ADVOCATING FROM HOME

On May 10th, 2021, the L.A. Times published an article reporting on the challenges survivors have been facing while trying to get their restraining orders served by the Sheriff's Department during the pandemic.

LACLJ Senior Attorney, Amanda Jancu, has led advocacy efforts in partnership with other legal services agencies to advocate for survivors who were being forced to go to the Sheriff's Department **in person** to process their restraining orders - a practice that put low-income survivors at greater risk of COVID-19.

Thanks to her leadership, we are happy to share that the Sheriff's Department has agreed to accept photocopies of original signatures (as opposed to only accepting original signatures). Now, survivors can more safely submit their restraining order documentation and feel a sense of relief not putting them and their families at further risk of violence or COVID-19.

[Click here to read the full article](#)



PROTECTING SURVIVORS' RIGHTS TO PRIVACY

In September 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security published a proposed rule that would dramatically expand the types of biometric data the Department collects on immigrants and U.S. Citizens. Under this rule, the government could collect and store indefinitely the DNA, irises, voices, faces and other personal characteristics of immigrants seeking asylum or visas - including survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

LACLJ submitted comments opposing the proposed rule, condemning the violation of privacy of the immigrant survivors we serve. We joined over 5,000 advocates across the nation in voicing our opposition to this harmful proposed rule.

Thanks to this organized effort, USCIS is withdrawing the harmful proposed biometrics rule and will not move forward with this requirement for immigrants and U.S. Citizens.

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