



Who is Columbia Legal Services (CLS)?

CLS is a nonprofit organization working to end systems that harm people who are incarcerated, undocumented, and/or experiencing poverty. CLS staff work with community members to understand the injustices they face and then fight alongside them in the courts and legislature. We bring lawsuits that will create change for large groups of people in Washington, such as all people living in prison, or all people without documentation. And in the legislature, we advocate for bills that extend justice to people impacted by poverty, incarceration and/or immigration status.

Because we seek to transform harmful systems, we can only take cases that will create widespread change and cannot offer legal representation for individuals.

In the legislature: examples of recent legislative priorities

- **Health care:** Funding health coverage for all low-income people in Washington regardless of immigration status
- **LFOs:** Dismantling the harmful system of legal financial obligations that follow people long after their sentences have been served
- **Charity Care:** Ensuring financial coverage for hospital care for all low-income people
- **Juvenile Records:** Transforming the problematic system for sealing juvenile records so they do not follow people into adulthood
- **Reducing the many harms of the criminal legal system,** such as removing enhanced sentencing and increasing earned time for people in confinement



In court: examples of recent lawsuits

Ending abusive discipline practices in juvenile rehabilitation centers.

Rogers v. Department of Children, Youth & Families (DYCF)

Young people in Washington’s juvenile detention centers were being held in solitary confinement, restrained with hands behind their backs, and forbidden from eating, drinking, sleeping, or using the bathroom, for up to 12 hours at a time – all for refusing to submit to strip searches. CLS sued and won \$102,000 in damages for the youth harmed, and robust policy changes to prevent this treatment of youth going forward.

Extending overtime pay rights to farm workers.

Martinez v. DeRuyter Bros.

While most workers in the U.S. won the right to overtime pay in 1938, farm workers had been excluded from the law. CLS sued on behalf of dairy workers in Washington and, after going all the way to WA Supreme Court, reached a settlement for just over \$1,000,000 for the workers, and reversed the racist policy that has excluded farm workers for nearly 100 years.

COVID protections for people in prison.

Rush v. Dep’t of Corrections and Dep’t of Health

People in prison have been denied meaningful protection from COVID-19 since day one of the pandemic. In our second lawsuit seeking to save lives, we demanded access to vaccination along with timely, accurate, and culturally responsive information about the COVID-19 vaccines. Some of our demands were met but daily life in prisons remains impacted by DOC’s ongoing failure to control transmission and we are seeking other ways to help.

Columbia Legal Services advocates for laws that advance social, economic, and racial equity for people living in poverty. We work toward a vision of a Washington State in which every person enjoys full human rights and economic opportunities.

www.columbialegal.org