

S U M M E R 2 0 2 6

NEWSLETTER



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At Catholic Migration Services, we believe that lasting change begins with standing alongside our clients and communities—listening to their experiences, advocating for their rights, and working together to create meaningful change.

This summer, we helped a domestic worker recover the wages she rightfully earned and supported a survivor through a decade-long journey toward immigration relief. Through months of advocacy and dedication of CMS housing organizers and the Corona Tenant Association, we helped Rosalia, a tenant in her 80s, move from a third-floor apartment to a safer first-floor home. Her story is a reminder that some victories are simply the relief of knowing that a neighbor is safer and that their daily life has become a little easier.

In this issue, we celebrate our clients' wins as well as the people who make this work possible—from our dedicated staff and summer legal interns to our generous partners and supporters. We are especially proud to recognize Supervising Immigration Counselor Marisol Canales for her Service Award at the 2026 CLINIC Convening and to welcome Ocean Financial Federal Credit Union as a new partner.

These stories are a reminder that when people come together, advocacy can change lives.

A Victory for Rosalia: Why We Organize



Rosalia in her first floor apartment

Rosalia is in her 80s, and for a long time, faced a daunting challenge each day: climbing the stairs to her third-floor apartment. With every trip up and down, the serious risk of a fall loomed over her and her family. When an apartment on the first floor became available, the Corona Tenant Association, along with CMS organizers, stood by her side, advocating fiercely for her right to live in a safer home. After months of advocacy, Management finally agreed to transfer Rosalia to the vacated first-floor apartment.

Looking at her photo, it's impossible not to reflect on the everyday relief this victory brings – no more exhausting climbs, running errands, and medical appointments are within reach, and life is just a little bit easier now.

These types of moments remind us why we do this work. Sometimes a campaign victory isn't measured by a headline or a policy win, sometimes it's measured by the relief on someone's face and knowing that their daily life has become safer because neighbors stood together.

Recovering the Wages Christina Rightfully Earned

Christina worked as a nanny and housekeeper, regularly putting in more than 40 hours each week without receiving the overtime pay that she was legally entitled to. Although she consistently went above and beyond expectations, making herself available to work nights and weekends as needed, she was denied basic employment benefits when she requested vacation time, her employer refused, falsely claiming she had exhausted her leave.

After being referred to Catholic Migration Services by one of our partners, National Domestic Workers, Christina met with our employment team to discuss her options. Her

CMS attorney discovered that she was owed a significant amount of overtime pay, and reached out to her former employer to recover Christina's owed wages.

After nearly a year of negotiations, CMS secured a settlement close to \$16,000 for Christina, fully compensating her for her unpaid overtime. Next spring, she will begin a nursing program with the goal of becoming a compassionate nurse dedicated to the caring of others.

As she reflects on this experience, Christina described her attorney as *"tremendously exceptional."* While she was aware that some laws protect nannies and housekeepers, working with CMS deepened her understanding of the state and federal laws protections available for domestic workers.

This case reminds us that these types of employees are often vulnerable to wage violations and exploitation. In collaboration with partners like National Domestic Workers Alliance, CMS continues to stand alongside workers like Christina, helping them secure the justice and dignity they deserve.



Left to Right: Rebecca R. (paralegal) and Ben (Managing Attorney) - Worker's Rights Program

Justice After a Decade: Veronica's Journey to a U visa

Veronica first came to CMS in 2015 after suffering severe exploitation as a live-in domestic worker in a private home. She worked very long hours, for which she was underpaid, and sexually harassed by her supervisor, another household employee. After her supervisor sexually assaulted her, she bravely reported the assault to her employer, who fired her on the spot. Anxious and fearful of retaliation, Veronica sought assistance from CMS' employment unit, who assisted her in reporting the violations, obtaining a U visa certification, and applying for a U visa, as the victim of a serious crime. Although the U visa process is lengthy, Veronica received a bona fide determination from USCIS in 2022, stating that she had met the



Lisa F. Arpaia - CMS volunteer lawyer

basic criteria for a U visa, and approving her work permit. However, in 2025, USCIS reversed course, sending Veronica and her attorney a Request for Evidence, because the agency did not believe that the New York State Department of Labor was qualified to provide the certification that Veronica had been the victim of a crime.

At this critical moment, CMS received vital support from volunteer immigration attorney Lisa Arpaia. With 30 years of experience, in immigration law and a deep expertise in relief for victims of crimes or violence, including U visas, T visas (for victims of trafficking, and VAWA self-petitions (for victims of domestic abuse).

Lisa provided expert advice and research assistance, and reviewed and revised the draft submission. When Veronica and her attorney received a Notice of Intent to Deny Veronica's petition, Lisa assisted with the response. As a result of this exceptional advocacy, USCIS ultimately decided to grant Veronica's petition and give her a U visa. Veronica expressed her immense gratitude to Lisa and the team at CMS, stating that, even though the immigration process had caused her much anxiety, she had confidence in her attorneys.

Veronica's story highlights the importance of expert legal support for survivors of workplace abuse. CMS is proud to advocate for clients like Veronica and with the support of our funders and donors, we can continue to do this work.

Community Events

The Impact of Sustained Community Advocacy: NYC Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) Rally

Each year the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) meets to determine how much landlords can increase the rent on rent-stabilized apartments in New York City. CMS tenant organizers have historically mobilized tenants who would be directly impacted by rent increases to voice their concerns through testimony and public actions.

This June CMS organized a rally outside of the RGB public hearing in Jamaica, Queens where tenants expressed their frustrations with rising rents and demanded a rent freeze or a rollback from previous rent increases to help address the city's ongoing affordability crisis.



Zoila (Elmhurst Tenant) and Carlos (CMS Housing Organizer)

In July, the RGB voted to freeze rents for one to two year renewal leases beginning between October 1, 2026, and September 30, 2027. While the RGB has frozen one-year leases before, this was the first time it has frozen a two-year lease as well. This marks a significant victory for tenants' advocates and the thousands of New Yorkers who organized and spoke out throughout the public hearings process.

Recognitions

Marisol Canales' Recognition at CLINIC Convening 2026



Marisol receiving the Service Award

Our Supervising Immigration Counselor, Marisol Canales, received the **Service Award** at this year's CLINIC Convening. This annual conference brings together immigration lawyers, advocates, and nonprofit leaders from across the country to share knowledge, discuss the evolving legal landscape of immigration law, and recognize the work and impact of these advocates.

Marisol is a dedicated and compassionate immigration advocate who consistently puts her clients first. She began her career working as an immigration paralegal at Emerald Isle Immigration Center, where she worked from 2006 to 2011. She joined Catholic Migration Services (CMS) in 2011, became a partially accredited DOJ representative in 2015 and was promoted to Supervising Counselor of CMS' Affirmative Unit in 2019.

Marisol is known throughout the organization as the religious visa guru and specializes in VAWA self-petitions. Her direct supervisor, Raluca, praised Marisol's commitment: "Marisol has a heart of gold and never hesitates to go the extra mile for clients. We're so proud of you, Marisol!"

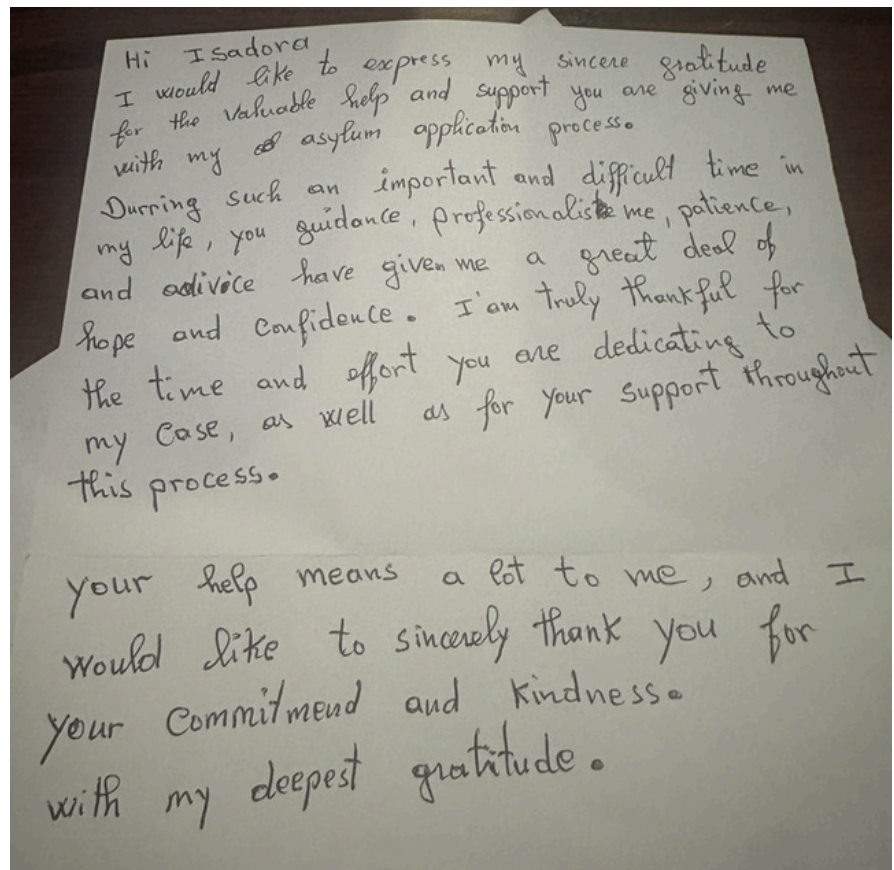
Congratulations, Marisol, on this well-deserved recognition and thank you for your many years of service.

The Power of Advocacy

At CMS, the greatest reward of our work is seeing the positive impact that access to justice can have on the lives of our clients and families.

Recently, Isadora, a senior staff attorney in the Removal Defense Program, received a heartfelt letter from one of her clients expressing gratitude for the support and legal assistance he received from our immigration services. The client's words serve as a reminder of the impact that dedicated advocacy can have on the lives of individuals and families in our communities.

We are honored to share this message of appreciation and proud to continue our mission of providing access to justice for those who need it most.



Letter from our client to Isadora - CMS Senior Staff Attorney

Recognitions

SPOTLIGHT: Summer Legal Interns

This Summer, Catholic Migration Services welcomed eight legal interns: Hendrick Castillo, Jose-Romarah Chery, Alexandra DeFrancesco, Della Maggio, Saul Puche, John Garcia, Christopher Manzon, and Isabella Scipioni to our organization. Working alongside our attorneys and legal staff, they conducted client intakes and interviews, performed legal research, and drafted motions, among other contributions. Throughout the summer, our interns developed practical skills that they will use throughout their legal careers, while making a difference in the communities that we serve.

Many interns shared that they are drawn to Catholic Migration Services because they believe in our mission to help underserved communities and make justice accessible to all. For some, the work is deeply personal. One intern shared a desire to provide "the absolute best representation" to underserved communities, while another was inspired by growing up in Brooklyn's Caribbean neighborhoods and witnessing firsthand the challenges families within the U.S immigration system. Others were excited to strengthen their advocacy skills by supporting tenants' rights or gaining experience representing individuals facing immigration detention.

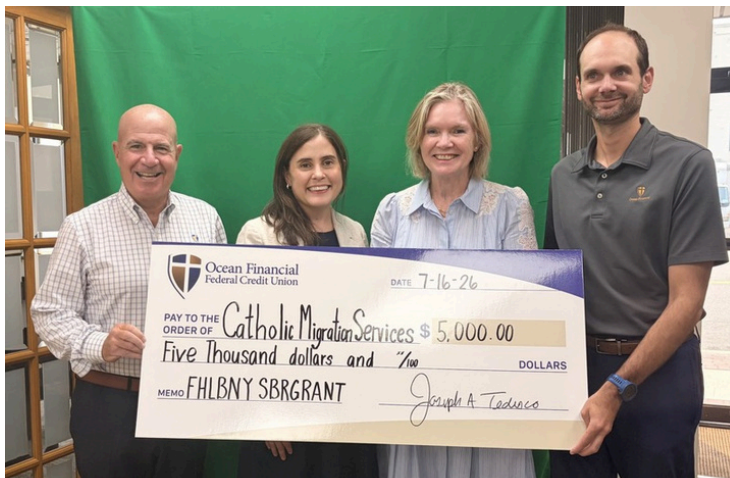
Outside work, our interns have many different interests and talents. They enjoy exploring New York City's museums and neighborhoods, traveling, gardening, thrifting, finding new music, making art and poetry, reading, gaming and trying new foods around the city.

We appreciate the energy, dedication, and new ideas our summer interns brought to CMS. It has been a pleasure to work with the next generation of advocates, and we thank Hendrick, Jose-Romarah, Alexandra, Della, Saul, John, Christopher, and Isabella for spending their summer with us. We wish them all the best as they continue their legal studies and pursue careers in public interest law.



Left to Right: Hendrick, John, Jose-Romarah, Isabella, Danielle and Alexandra

Welcoming Ocean Financial Federal Credit Union: Strengthening Our Mission Through Partnership



Left to Right: Joseph A. Tedesco (Ocean Financial FCU CEO), Magdalena Barbasa (CMS Director of Legal Services), Emmie Glynn Ryan (CMS CEO), and Daniel Goosk (Ocean Financial FCU Director of Lending)

This June, Catholic Migration Services was honored to receive a generous grant from Ocean Financial Federal Credit Union. This faith-based organization is dedicated to strengthening local communities through financial education programs, community engagement, and support for charitable causes.

We are deeply grateful for their generosity and are delighted to welcome Ocean Financial Federal Credit Union as a valued partner in our mission to serve immigrant families and vulnerable New Yorkers.

Thank You to Our Partners

AIG
CLINIC
NATIONAL DOMESTIC ALLIANCE
OCEAN FINANCIAL FEDERAL CREDIT UNIT

Support our work with a tax deductible donation!



Join us in our Shining Star Celebration!

A poster for the "Shining Star Celebration" featuring gold stars and confetti on the left side. The text on the right includes the Catholic Migration Services logo, the event title "Save the Date! 2026 SHINING STAR Celebration", the date and time "THURSDAY NOVEMBER 12, 2026 6:00 - 10:00 PM", and the location "Russo's on the Bay, Howard Beach, Queens".

CATHOLIC
MIGRATION
SERVICES

PROMOTING JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

Save the Date!
2026
SHINING STAR
Celebration

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 12, 2026
6:00 - 10:00 PM

Russo's on the Bay, Howard Beach, Queens