



Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr.

▪ American Legal Aid Expert

BIOGRAPHY

Wilhelm H. Joseph Jr. served as executive director of Maryland Legal Aid from 1996 until his recent retirement in 2022. Previously, he served as director of the Legal Support Unit at Legal Services for New York City (13 years) and executive director of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services (8 years).

A graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law and Harvard University–JFK School of Government, Mr. Joseph has served on numerous national and local nonprofit public-interest boards, including the American Bar Association’s Section of Litigation Legal Services Project, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, Civil Justice, Inc., and the Pro Bono Resource Center.

In addition, Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge (Ret.) Robert M. Bell appointed Mr. Joseph to the Maryland Commission on Public Trust and Confidence and the Maryland Access to Justice Commission. Mr. Joseph has been invited to be a participant in numerous law-related and human rights conferences and delegations in the United States, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Asia including North and South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam; South Africa and other western and northern African countries; and eastern and western Europe.

Mr. Joseph was the recipient of the 2008 Dennison Ray Award (given biennially by the National Legal Aid & Defender Association); the Maryland Legal Services Corporation **2010 Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award**; the National Conference of Black Lawyers’ **Lawyer of the Year Award**, and the **Hope Stevens Award for International Affairs and World Peace**, among others. In 2006 and 2012, The **Daily Record**, Maryland’s legal business newspaper, selected Mr. Joseph as an Influential Marylander. Also in 2012, the **Daily Record** selected and honored Mr. Joseph as one of the Most Admired CEO’s in Maryland. In 2013, he was honored with the newspaper’s **Leadership in Law Award**, and in 2017 he received **The Daily Record’s inaugural ICON Award** for his notable success and demonstration of strong leadership both within and outside of the legal field.

Under Mr. Joseph’s leadership, funding for Maryland Legal Aid grew from \$8 million a year to more than \$35 million a year (2023). Maryland Legal Aid, which is staffed by more than 250 employees working from 12 statewide office locations, is one of the largest providers of direct legal services in the U.S. and the 3rd largest law firm in Maryland*, and is nationally recognized for providing high-quality and innovative service to low-income clients. In 2010, Maryland Legal Aid became the first legal services program in the United States to formally adopt a human rights framework for its advocacy and representation of low-income persons.