



Pine Tree Legal Assistance

# 2024 Annual Report



On the path to justice

# MISSION

Our mission is to ensure that state and federal laws affecting poor people are upheld, while also addressing the systemic barriers to justice faced by Mainers with low incomes.

# APPROACH

We provide free civil legal assistance in cases where legal aid can make a difference in one's ability to attain basic human needs or enforce basic rights.

# VALUES

Respect ● Optimism ● Impact ● Professionalism ● Ownership ● Monitoring for Results ● Sustainability

# Thank you for being part of the Pine Tree community

The need for Pine Tree's services has never been more urgent. Every day, low-income Mainers must seek justice under increasingly challenging circumstances. Amidst these difficult times, I am proud to be able to assure you that the Pine Tree community remains strong, committed, and resilient, thanks to the care of people like you.

We have always been an organization of many minds and hearts, and we have always been strongest when we work together in community. Whether you're a client receiving our assistance, a member of our staff or Board of Directors, or a dedicated supporter, we're grateful to be on the path to justice alongside you.



Tom Fritzsche  
Executive Director





# We **can** get you there from here

Our programs serve a wide of range of needs across the state, with staff working at **6 offices from Portland to Presque Isle.**

Our areas of expertise include:



Rental Housing



Indigenous Peoples  
Rights & Tribal Law



Farmworkers, Work &  
School



Health & Public Benefits



Foreclosure Prevention  
& Consumer Law



Veterans Rights



Domestic Violence,  
Sexual Assault & Abuse



Divorce, Custody &  
Family



Money, Taxes & Debt

# ADDRESSING NEEDS



10.6%

More than 10% of Mainers live in poverty.



3 in 4

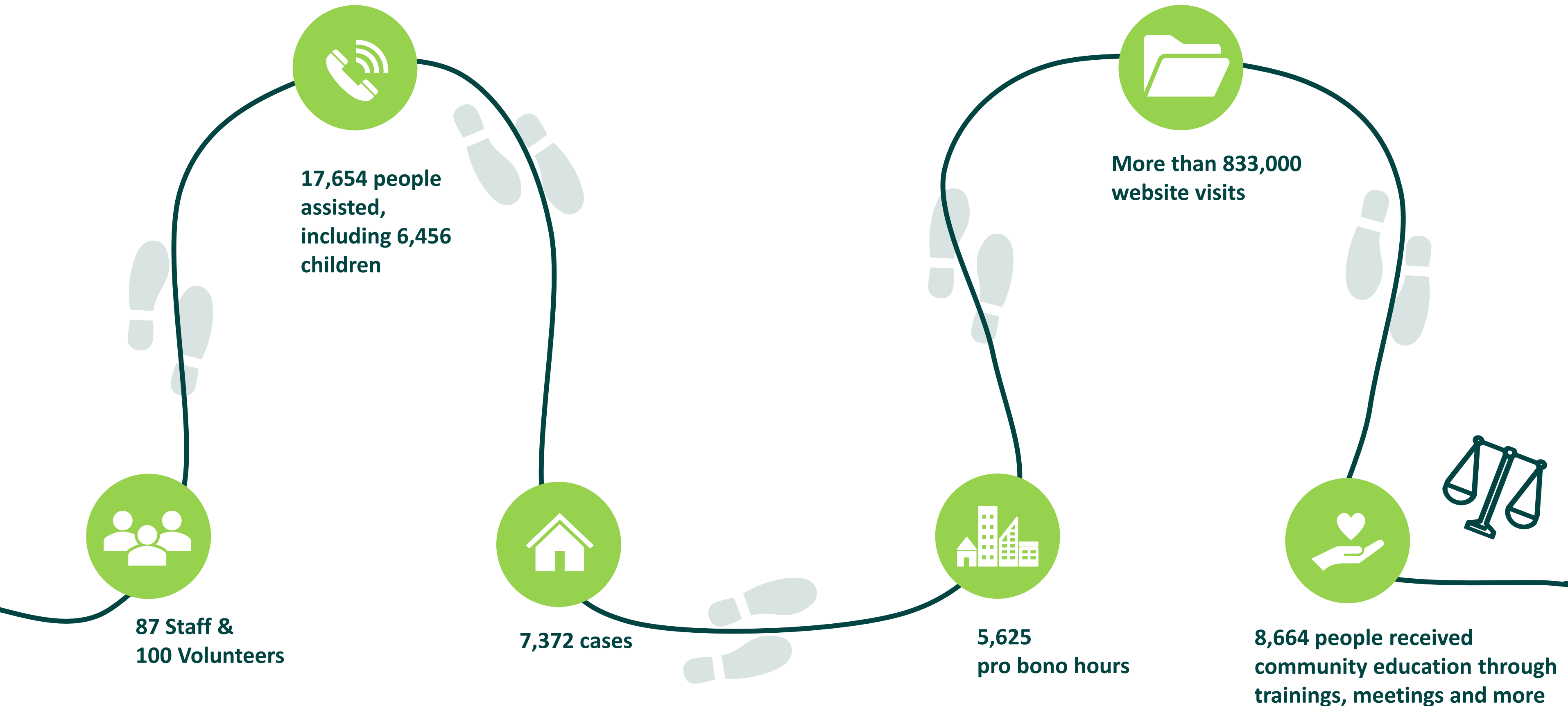
3 in 4 low-income Mainers will face at least one civil legal problem this year.



13.2

More than thirteen people are evicted each day in Maine, on average.

# Our path to justice in 2024



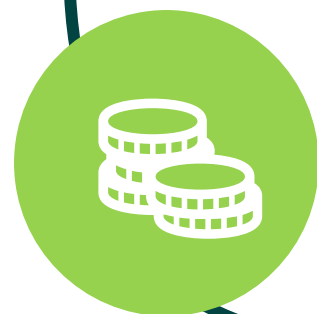




More than 360  
protections from abuse  
established or extended



1,798  
households  
avoided eviction



\$3,733,036  
in income, benefits &  
savings for our clients







*Inaugural fellow Jordan Miller (left) with Jack Haycock, Debi Berthiaume, and Dan Monahan at Pine Tree's Machias Office in Washington County.*

# Miller Rural Justice Fellowship

## Expanding legal aid for rural Mainers



The hills, forests and fields of Aroostook and Washington counties make up one-third of the entire state of Maine. But despite their vast reaches, these rural counties collectively have fewer than 100 working attorneys – that's less than 3 percent of all working attorneys in Maine.

While these easternmost and northernmost stretches of Maine may have low population densities, their need for legal assistance remains high. A 2022 national survey conducted by the Legal Services Corporation found that 77 percent of low-income rural households experienced at least one civil legal problem in the previous year.

Despite the great need for legal aid in Maine's rural regions, recruiting and retaining attorneys in these remote areas has proven challenging. To help address this need, we launched the Elinor and Charles Miller Rural Justice Fellowship in 2024. The fellowship, based out of our Machias and Presque Isle offices, offers recent law school graduates the opportunity to make a difference in rural communities while also gaining valuable early-career legal experience.

The fellowship does not stipulate how many or what types of cases fellows must take on, so they are free to explore all of Pine Tree's focus areas.



Our inaugural Fellow, Jordan Miller (who has no relation to the namesakes of the fellowship), began working out of our Machias Office in September 2024. A graduate of Colby College, Jordan left Maine to go to law school at New York University but returned to intern with Pine Tree at our Augusta Office during his first summer at NYU. After graduating from law school, he decided to return back to Maine and Pine Tree through the Miller Fellowship. “It was a chance to experience something unique while still doing the work that I want to do,” says Jordan, who primarily worked with tenants facing eviction as an intern and continues to take on housing cases as a fellow.

Jordan has also expanded his expertise in other areas of law during his fellowship. In one case, a client needed help navigating a legal dispute with a utility company that demanded that the client pay debts owed by previous occupants of a rental that they were trying to move into. Unless this client paid those debts owed by the former tenants, they could not turn on the electricity in their new home. Jordan represented this client, holding the utility company accountable and gaining valuable new insights and knowledge that he has been able to share with other colleagues at Pine Tree.

In September 2025, we welcomed our second Miller Fellow, J-T Mullins, at our Presque Isle Office. “I wanted to go where I thought there was the biggest need, and that is in Aroostook County and northern Maine in general,” J-T says.

The Miller Fellowship will continue rotating between Machias and Presque Isle each year, with each fellow serving two years. We are proud of what our fellows have achieved so far, and look forward to the future of this program and the justice it will help bring to Maine's rural residents.



## A Legacy of Justice

The Miller Fellowship celebrates the legacy of Ellie and Charlie Miller, who both had careers dedicated to equal access to justice in Maine. Ellie worked on staff at Pine Tree for several decades and currently serves on our Board of Directors. Charlie, who passed away in August 2023, was a pillar in Maine’s legal community. He worked for decades in real estate and business law and offered his expertise and wisdom to Pine Tree and many other charitable organizations.

We are proud to carry on the legacy of Ellie and Charlie through the Miller Fellowship.





# Celebrating 20 Years of KIDSLegal



In 2024, we celebrated 20 years of KIDSLegal, a specialty unit within Pine Tree that exclusively focuses on addressing the unique needs of low-income children and youth in Maine. From investigating unlawful expulsions from school to confronting bullying, we work to ensure that all Mainers have access to justice, no matter their age.

KIDSLegal is Maine's first and only children's rights project.

## What KIDSLegal believes

We believe that an injustice against a child can last a lifetime. That's why we are committed to addressing the most pressing needs of vulnerable youth in Maine to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and access to a meaningful education.

## What KIDSLegal does

We provide direct representation to children, youth, and parents or caregivers on their behalf, and also provide consultations and trainings in Maine about the rights of children and youth.



In 2024, we closed nearly 150 KIDSLegal cases, including this success story:

A young student, let's call him Jack, was in first grade when he was diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety and other conditions that made it difficult for him to focus at school. He was often distressed in class. His school called his mother regularly with complaints and concerns. He sometimes spent the entire day in the principal's office. Eventually, the school took steps to expel him.

Dismayed by this development, Jack's mother reached out to Pine Tree for help. KIDSLegal attorney Katherine Tarpley confidently assured her that she would work to bring Jack the justice and support that he lawfully deserved.

As she investigated the case, Katherine found that the school's planned expulsion violated state law. Instead, she ensured Jack received access to education immediately and facilitated an evaluation that found that he was eligible for services he had not been receiving at school. She helped his mother transfer him to a new school that was able to provide the care and attention that he needed.

Jack had great success at his new placement. Over time, he was able to maintain regulation throughout the day, connected well with classmates and teachers, and excelled in science and math. He and his mother were relieved to have found the level of support that Jack should have been receiving all along, and a solution that allowed him to continue growing into a bright and thoughtful young child. Katherine remained in touch with the family through the duration of the school year and ensured that they continued on a path of success.





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*"I am so proud of the work that Pine Tree does every day. From one end of Maine to the other, Pine Tree lawyers help people who are facing circumstances that are often difficult, complex and frightening. They do it efficiently and effectively, using limited resources to serve as many clients as possible."*

Wendy Harlan  
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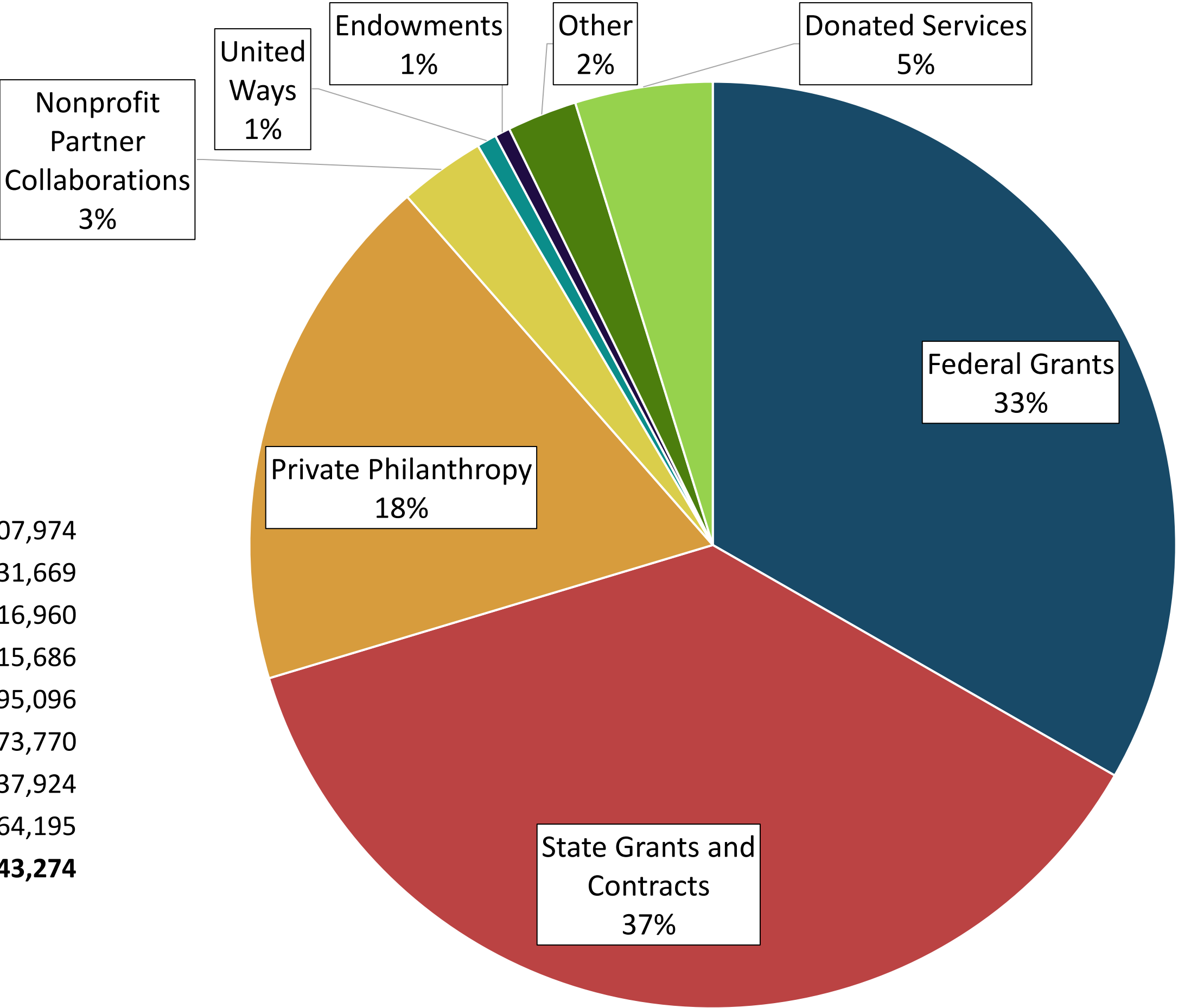
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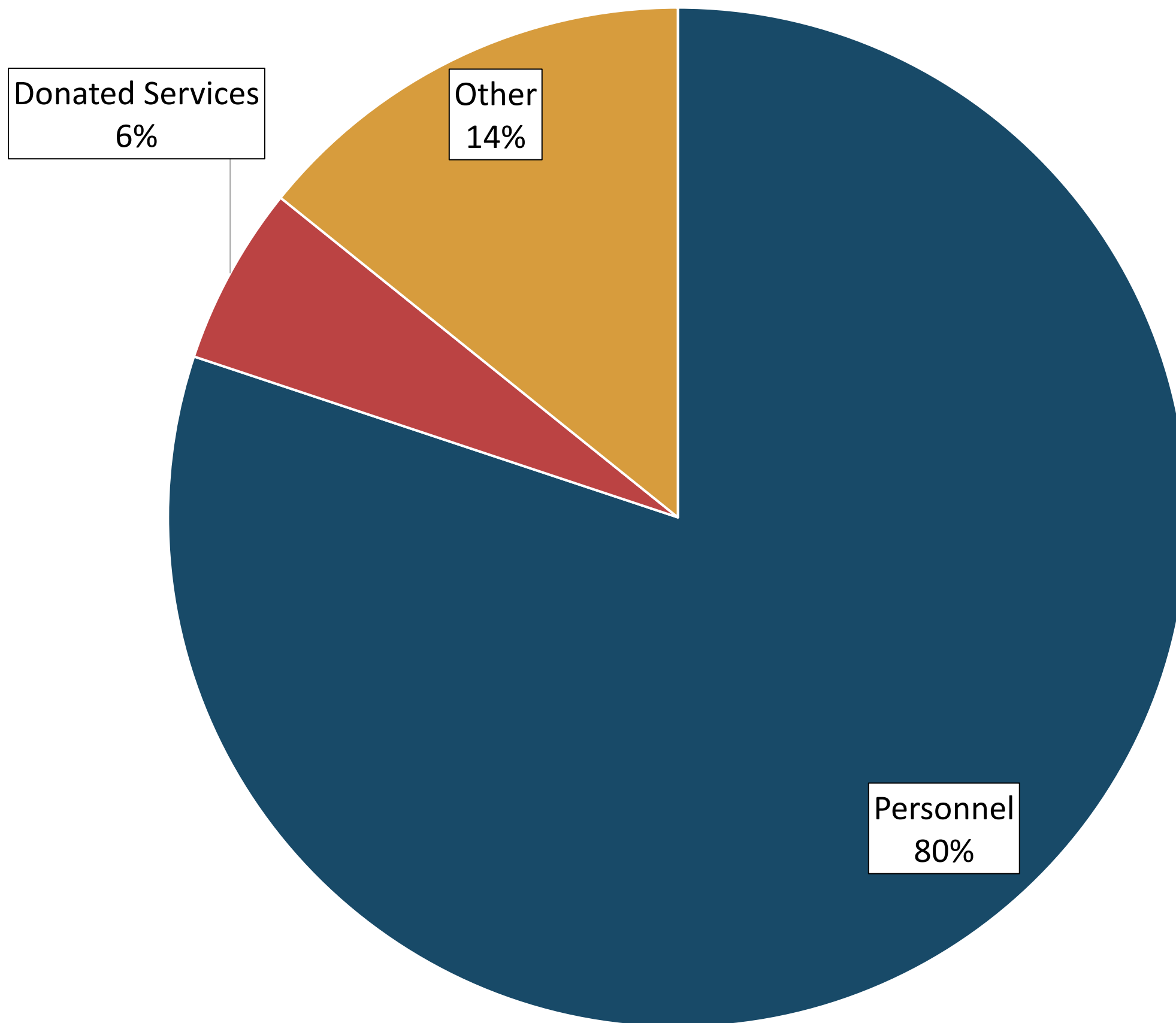
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# 2024 Revenue

Federal Grants	\$4,607,974
State Grants and Contracts	\$5,131,669
Private Philanthropy	\$2,516,960
Nonprofit Partner Collaborations	\$415,686
United Ways	\$95,096
Endowments	\$73,770
Other	\$337,924
Donated Services	\$664,195
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$13,843,274</b>







# 2024 Expenses

Personnel	\$9,376,486
Occupancy	\$317,136
Supplies and Equipment	\$241,078
Travel and Training	\$270,793
Fundraising	\$15,806
Sub-grants	\$21,428
Other	\$797,797
Donated Services	\$664,195
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$11,704,719</b>



# Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Augusta ● Bangor ● Lewiston ● Machias ● Portland ● Presque Isle

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<https://ptla.org>

<https://kidslegal.org>

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