

Happy Holidays!

We hope that you are staying safe during the holiday season. During these unprecedented times, BLC advocates are still hard at work providing accessible legal aid to our community members who need it most. BLC Clients like Maya. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maya received a notice from the federal government that stated she owed the Social Security Administration (SSA) over \$3,000, and that she would be losing access to the financial assistance she needed to survive.

When Maya received the notice below, she was terrified and confused. Maya did not have the \$3,000 Social Security told her she must return in 30 days. Additionally, she knew she would be losing access to health care and the cash she needed each month to stay housed. Maya did not know how to navigate the complicated bureaucratic system on her own. Luckily, because of your support, she had someone to turn to for help.

Social Security Administration Supplemental Security Income Notice of Overpayment

SOCIAL SECURITY
SUITE B
13510 AURORA AVE N
SEATTLE, WA 98133-7522
Date: April 02, 2020

We are writing to let you know that we have paid you \$3,084.00 too much Supplemental Security Income (SSI) money. The overpayment happened 09/19 to 12/19.

The overpayment because you had resources valued in excess of \$2000.

Later in this letter, we'll give you a detailed explanation of your overpayment.

You must pay us back unless we decide you shouldn't have to pay us back or we are wrong about the overpayment. If you think you shouldn't have to pay us back or disagree with the decision about the overpayment, you can:


- Ask for a waiver,
- Ask for an appeal, or
- Do both.

This letter will tell you more about these things you can do.

Because of your support, when BLC Client Maya received this notice, she was terrified but had someone to turn to for help when she needed it.



Please continue on the next page



When Maya first contacted BLC, she was thrilled that her paralegal and attorney team were able to provide services to her in her native language, Tigrinya. Her case team acted quickly upon taking her case in April 2020 so that Maya could focus on staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her attorney found that Social Security assessed an overpayment because she owned a 20 year old Toyota Corolla that was valued at \$900. People who are receiving SSI benefits cannot have more than \$2,000 in assets at any time, and because SSA determined her vehicle to be worth \$900, she was over the asset limit.

Maya's attorney worked quickly to appeal the decision. She was already dealing with the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, but now was faced with the reality that she may lose her only source of income, her housing, and access to health care during a time of immense uncertainty.

Maya's attorney discovered right away that the Social Security Administration assessed the value of the car to be much higher than was reasonable and requested that the entire overpayment be waived immediately. He collected photos of the vehicle, looked up the value on Kelly Blue Book, and communicated tirelessly with Social Security so Maya would not experience a disruption in the her monthly benefits that kept her housed and fed.

Maya's attorney successfully argued that the Social Security Administration incorrectly assessed the value of Maya's vehicle, and her overpayment was immediately waived.

When Maya first opened the notice included on the prior page, she feared that she owed the federal government thousands of dollars, that she would lose access to her doctor and other medical professionals, and that she may experience homelessness. Because of your support, she had a team of advocates by her side that provided life changing advocacy in her native language so that she did not have to navigate this complicated federal system alone. Her life was not completely upended by this mistake that was made by the Social Security Administration.

Today, Maya is able to shelter in place at home and has access to the financial means needed to stay housed this winter and during this pandemic because of you.

There are many other members of our community who need our help. We will do whatever it takes to provide financial stability for our community members who need it most -- and you are a pivotal part of this journey.

Please make a gift of \$100 to support this life changing work today.

With Gratitude,



Maryann Nelson
BLC Board President

