It was the fall of 2016, and I was leaving a legislative committee meeting for the proposed “Rethink Discipline” bills. A lobbyist abruptly and angrily told me they were pulling support. We would lose everything. My stomach dropped.

I thought back to how long and how hard we had worked for this moment. The Student Advocacy Center has been pushing to overturn “zero tolerance” since it first passed in 1994. And I personally had been fighting for its demise since 2001.

I thought back to the year 2000, the first time I met SAC’s passionate founder, Ruth Zweifler, who remains on our board of directors today. I was stunned to learn that students were sitting at home with no school willing to educate them. My heart was broken when I met student after student in person.

I thought back to years of conference calls and in-person meetings with so many partners like the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, the Michigan League for Public Policy, and Michigan’s Children. I remember driving in Ruth’s silver VW Bug to Lansing over and over, presenting to the State Board of Education and different legislators. I wonder how many miles we drove over the years?

I remember a kitchen table conversation with Ruth and Mark Fancher from the ACLU of Michigan, just as they began to ponder their powerful campaign on the school-to-prison pipeline. They became indispensable, tireless partners (a special shoutout to Rodd Monts from ACLU) and we collaborated with them on their critical 2009 report on the issue.

I reflected on how so many forces seemed to unite in the past few years, making this moment possible. There was the development of the Michigan School Justice Partnership, which brought together several state departments, schools and community members with a call to action in 2012. Every county was to develop a team and establish a plan of action to reduce expulsions, suspensions and absenteeism. There was a unified and diverse set of voices now saying the state’s overly harsh school discipline laws needed to change.

### History Highlights

- **1994** - Michigan enacts zero tolerance legislation mandating permanent expulsion for various offenses, exceeding federal requirements.
- **1995, 1999** - The law was amended to add additional mandatory expulsions.
- **2003, 2005** - SAC works on important publications highlighting the harm of zero tolerance.
- **2009** - In collaboration with SAC, ACLU of Michigan releases “Reclaiming Michigan’s Throwaway Kids: Students Trapped in the School-to-Prison Pipeline” and launches a campaign to revise the state’s school discipline code.
- **2013** - The Michigan School Justice Partnership is launched. SAC participates on 3 county teams.
2014 - Youth from Detroit, Ypsilanti and elsewhere joined together and organized an 80-mile walk for education from Detroit to Lansing to raise awareness about suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions.

2015 - Youth from Ypsilanti, Jackson, Detroit and other organizations staged a “Zero Tolerance Game of Life” demonstration on the Capitol Lawn.

May 3, 2016 - Rethink Discipline bills introduced in the House and passed on June 2.

Spring and Fall of 2016 - SAC youth testified before state legislators and participated in lobbying at the Capitol.

December 2016 - Passed by the Senate, Presented and Approved by Governor; Filed with Secretary of State, becomes Public Acts 360-366 of 2016

February 14, 2017 - Governor Snyder publically signs the Rethink Discipline bills. SAC and two students traveled to Lansing to take part.

August 1, 2017 - Rethink Discipline bills take effect.

www.studentadvocacycenter.org/policy/timeline

I thought of the many youth who so creatively asked for change on this issue. One of the most touching moments was when we collaborated with a group of youth from Detroit, who organized a march from Detroit to Lansing through the night, and delivered passionate speeches on the Capitol Lawn.

They dreamed bigger than I ever could have. I knew in that moment with the lobbyist that I had to dream big, too.

The bills were to end state-mandated expulsions, and create a rebuttable presumption that removals over 10 days were not justified until seven factors were considered, including “lesser interventions.” This language shifted the burden of proof from families, begging for their child’s education, to school districts.

The lobbyist and some school administrators were concerned about this language, but we believed it to be a critical protection for vulnerable students. We fought hard, beside our partners, for it to stay in.

The bills finally passed with the “rebuttable presumption” clause intact, and I was beyond proud to bring two students with me to see the bills be signed into law.

The new bills went into effect Aug. 1, and so far in the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, we have been in high demand, as families seek to understand their rights and districts try to figure out how to implement. We have a long history of successfully using “lesser interventions,” and we are eager to partner with districts to make this happen.

We hope and expect it will mean a shift in our advocacy and support work: Slightly less time in scary expulsion meetings and more time helping students connect to community service, write apology letters and reflection papers, and build their social skills.

We have been doing this “support” work for a long time, but the importance of it became particularly clear last winter when we asked families and students about the most significant change they experienced being part of our programs. We had so many clients reflect on the student’s changes in maturity, that we decided to add that to our revised mission statement. We are proud that we not only help students get back into school and address the barriers to learning — but that we also intentionally do the work to help students reflect, learn new skills and grow.

Thank you for whatever part you played in supporting our journey over the past 20 years of fighting zero tolerance. We hope you continue to stand by our side. The most important work still lies ahead.

Peri Stone-Palmquist
# By the Numbers

**760** served  
**662** unduplicated  
**100%+** over 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Program</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Helpline</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Advocacy - Washtenaw</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Advocacy - Jackson</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Advocacy - Wayne</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check and Connect - Washtenaw</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check and Connect - Detroit</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges to School - Jackson</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Action Michigan - Ypsilanti/Jackson</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Rights Project</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Advocates of Mid-Michigan</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee-Based Advocacy (Southeast MI)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>760</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Advocacy &amp; Support</th>
<th>Jackson</th>
<th>Washtenaw</th>
<th>Wayne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Improved attendance</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Expulsion averted</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Decreased disciplinary referrals/suspensions</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Increased grades or maintained passing grades</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of out of school students placed in school setting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Check and Connect – Washtenaw**
- 85% of our youth improved their grades or maintained passing grades overall
- 82.4% decreased disciplinary referrals/suspensions or maintained 0-1-day out-of-school suspensions

**Bridges to School - Jackson**
- 88% of students improved attendance
- 100% improved or maintained attendance
### Staff

- Peri Stone-Palmquist, MSW, MPP, Executive Director
- Dee Blair, Advocate
- Elizabeth Bowker, JD, LLM, Advocate
  (*We wish Elizabeth the best in new endeavors. She moved to DC in October 2017 after serving SAC more than 8 years.)
- Kristina Cosgrove, BSW, Mentor
- Hakim Crampton, YAM Adult Ally
- Anell Eccleston, BSW, Mentor
- Danielle Flint, MSW, Wayne County Director
- Kathleen Kosobud, MA, NBCT, Advocate
- Annissa Lewis, MA, LPC, LBSW, NCC, B2S Program Director
- Kelly Ottaway, LLPC, B2S Family Advocate
- Amy Wilhelm, BSW, Programs Coordinator
- Gordie Wykes, Mentor
- Contractor Julia Gilbert, Accountant

### 2016-2017 Board

- Cynthia Maritato Shick (Chair)
- Faye Askew-King (Vice-Chair)
- Joel Gechter (Treasurer)
- Claudette Braxton (Secretary)
- Nakisha Chaney
- Craig Hernandez
- Katie Hoener
- Jimmie Jones
- Branden Magee (youth member)
- Rossi Ray-Taylor
- Francisco Sanchez
- DiAnna Solomon
- Prestine Spratt (youth member)
- Peri Stone-Palmquist (staff)
- Dwight Wilson
- Ruth Zweifler (founding executive director)
- Board member emeritus: Jim Hawkins and Calvin Williams

### Volunteer Advocates

- **Volunteer Hours (other)**: 130.5
- **Volunteer Hours Value**: $1,305
- **Volunteer Tutoring Hours**: 131.5
- **Volunteer Tutoring Value**: $2,630

### Intern Hours

- **4,857 Intern hours**
- **Valued at $62,866**
A new evaluation tool

To gain a richer understanding of our work, SAC piloted a narrative-based qualitative evaluation method: Most Significant Change (MSC), which asks clients about their most significant change since being involved with a program. It involves three steps: 1) collecting the stories through interviews, 2) selecting the most significant stories through internal meetings, and 3) analyzing the stories and selection process.

We partnered with an evaluation class at the University of Michigan School of Social Work to implement. Twenty-six students and 14 parents/caregivers participated in three counties. Participants were part of our Education Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Stories</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Themes Emerged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Note: the student is a second grader)</em> “I don’t talk about killing myself any more. I think that is what (my mentor) helped me with. ”</td>
<td>Check and Connect</td>
<td>Positivity about life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ My motivation has changed by all the help I’ve been getting. Motivation has gone up. I want to finish school. You are hiring tutors. The help is amazing. Before, I was literally I was just a number in the classroom. No help. I needed more structure. I needed more one on one. I’m not depressed anymore, in jail, just waiting for court dates. I’m motivated to get my diploma. ”</td>
<td>Education Advocacy</td>
<td>Academic motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maturation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positivity about life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ When I first talked to (my mentor), I was going through a lot with my anger and how I treated females. And now that I’ve been working with him for 3+ years, everything has been better because I can talk my issues out with an adult. He has shown me other ways to control certain situation, my grades have improved more. So overall everything is well. ”</td>
<td>Check and Connect</td>
<td>Maturation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a life coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Note: Mother of an adult student with disabilities who had been denied enrollment for two months). “I promise you if you had not intervened, I would still be calling (the district). I had registered him, he had two start dates, no one ever got back to me to tour the program. This went on for two months or so. And then I got in touch with (the program director) and he was just waiting on the releases and paperwork to come over. Just a simple fax or email. Then we wrestled with (the district) for two weeks and then I had to call (SAC). I'm totally satisfied and I honestly would not have gotten it done.”

(Student in foster care) “The most significant change since working with SAC has been helping me with new schools and being there for me when I move. Starting new schools is really rough, but it is kind of a little easier, knowing that SAC is going to make sure that I am in the right classes and take me to sign up for school. SAC also gives me a lot of books, which is cool and talk to my teachers about me being in foster case so that I don't have to do so because it can be weird.”

“My kid is in the appropriate placement (school) that fits his needs. I have noticed he takes responsibility for what he’s done more, and apologizes when he’s wrong. He cares more. He used to be nonchalant. But, now he acknowledges when he makes mistakes. He accepts “no” better. He used to get upset and throw things or break things when he didn’t like the response he got to a question. But now, our relationship is better. When (SAC) went with us to the hospital and communicated some of his needs, that I didn’t know how to explain to them, it made them do further testing and monitoring. He stayed in longer, which helped us figure out what was really going on. This helped us find the best setting for my kid. Also, (SAC) contacted the special education director at the district, preventing the school from expelling him, when he was very close to being expelled. We didn’t even have to go to a hearing.”
Financial Snapshot

REVENUE

- Grants: 85%
- Contributions: 4%
- Special Events: 1%
- Fees for Advocacy Services: 10%

REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$578,818</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$68,359</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>$29,499</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees for Advocacy Services</td>
<td>$2,847</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong></td>
<td>$679,523</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPENSES

- Program Services: 88%
- Management and General Costs: 9%
- Fundraising: 3%

EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>$435,001</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and General Costs</td>
<td>$45,352</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$13,926</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td>$494,279</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The difference between revenue and expenses is due to the timing of grants.

A Note

SAC is proud that 88% of our revenue goes to programs, a percentage that would qualify us for the highest score on financial efficiency by organizations such as Charity Navigator. Their data shows that 70% of charities spend at least 75% of their budgets on programs.

SAC is a small organization, where even administrative staff members engage in direct service. But we also value high quality governance, oversight and quality control. We urge donors to check out sites such as overheadmyth.com, which asks donors to challenge the false conception that financial ratios are a proxy for overall nonprofit performance.

Please know we are committed to being good stewards of the resources given to us. Thank you for your support.
**Our Supporters**

### Funders
- Access to Justice Fund Michigan State Bar Foundation
- Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
- The Arc of Michigan
- The Austin Memorial Foundation
- Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund
- Buhr Foundation
- Carls Foundation
- Charles Mott Foundation
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Dignity In Schools
- Jackson Community Foundation
- Karen Colina Wilson Foundation
- WK Kellogg Foundation
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc
- Skillman Foundation
- Speckhard-Knight Charitable Foundation
- The Towsley Foundation
- United Way of Washtenaw County
- Washtenaw Coordinated Funders
- Washtenaw County OCED
- Washtenaw County’s Community Mental Health
- Washtenaw County Trial Court
- Wayne County CCF

### Monthly Givers
A special thank you to our monthly donors who have committed to regular and ongoing support:
- Jessica “Decky” Alexander and Bruce Kutinsky,
- Faye Askew-King, Nakisha Chaney, David and Jennifer Haines,
- Carrie and Greg Hammerman, Katie Hoener, Marjorie Kauth-Karjala, Jeralyn Lowe, Cynthia Maritato Shick,
- Peri and Matt Stone-Palmquist, Dwight Wilson, Gail Wolkoff, Ruth and Andy Zweifler

### Launch Giving Circle
Thank you to our young professionals and college students who are committed to fighting the school-to-prison pipeline and are “launching” our community’s students on a path to learning! We appreciate our Giving Circle donors: Julia Cohen and Jimmie Jones

### Legacy Society
We are thankful for our Legacy Society who include SAC in their Will or Charitable Trust!
- Peri and Matt Stone-Palmquist

### Annual Event Support
**Salutatorian:** Joan Binkow, Leslie Desmond & Phil Stroffregen


**Rising Scholar:** Anonymous, Ann Arbor NAACP, Judy Martin & Lynn Jondahl, Michael Allemand & Janis Bobrin, Karen Chapell, NSF International, Lynnette Rhodes, Richard & Carol Sheridan, Sybil Stokes, Laurita Thomas, ThinkStretch
