



From Our 2021 Co-Chairs

**GIGI SANCHEZ**

I am honored to serve with Ben Marcus as a Co-Chair for Maine's 2022 Campaign for Justice. The Campaign epitomizes the bedrock commitment of Maine lawyers to access to justice for all Mainers. As a past-President of the Maine State Bar Association and the Cumberland County Bar Association, I have come to know firsthand how dedicated our legal community is to leveling the playing field for all our neighbors. We are a group of people bound by a common profession, but on a broader, more basic scale, we are simply humans who believe in the concepts of truth and fairness.

Today, while we all experience high inflation and escalating housing costs, it is impossible not to feel the pinch. In these times, the needs of Maine's most vulnerable citizens are especially profound. Through my experiences working with the Maine Justice Foundation and the Coffin Fellowship, I see firsthand how stark the differences are. I feel compelled to help as much as I can. The six legal aid providers served by the Campaign for Justice are doing incredible work, but they need our help. Ben and I look forward to sharing the astounding accomplishments of the dedicated providers with you and your firms. Thank you for standing with us. We know Maine's lawyers will continue to support the Campaign which is, ultimately, support of the rule of law and justice for all.

**BEN MARCUS**

I am very pleased to Co-Chair the 2022 Campaign for Justice with Gigi Sanchez. It's abundantly clear how different the interactions in our courtrooms across the state are when an individual has access to sufficient counsel. Fortunately, our Maine Bar is extremely generous and like-minded regarding the importance of assuring that our fellow Mainers with modest means nonetheless have access to quality legal advice. Maine lawyers are, I believe, unique in this respect. We should all be proud of what we accomplish together every year in this regard.

While the six civil legal aid providers supported by the Campaign work hard to help everyone they can, it's unfortunately true that with the limited resources they have, they are only able to help a fraction of those who seek them out. It's my hope that this year, which looks to be one of dire need, that Gigi, myself, and all of us together as the legal community can make this our best Campaign for Justice year yet. I look forward to speaking with many of you in 2022, and thank you for your unwavering commitment to justice!

\$664,000 Raised for Legal Aid

Thanks to our 2021 Co-Chairs, Cesar and David

The generosity of the Campaign for Justice supporters you will read about in these pages—and the impact of Campaign giving on those vulnerable Mainers whose stories are told here—are a result of the efforts of our 2021 Campaign Co-Chairs, Cesar Britos of Unum and David Soley of Bernstein Shur.

Cesar and David, at the helm of our Campaign and with a strong cadre of volunteers behind them, went undaunted into the second year of pandemic-driven, virtual-only fundraising efforts. They not only met the challenges of a “Zoom meeting” Campaign, but they also exceeded all expectations—surpassing our original goal of \$635,000 with ease (though they might, perhaps, refute that last part.). Cesar and David went headlong into county bar meetings, Inns of Court, firm appearances, Bar events and many other venues with their eyes on providing as much aid as possible to an increasingly needy Maine public.

Thanks to their tireless efforts, Cesar and David delivered the second-highest ever Campaign total in history, securing much needed funds for Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice, Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project, and Pine Tree Legal Assistance. At the same time, they increased the visibility of the Campaign for Justice by thinking outside the box and adding to our efforts many new and valuable connections and resources.

2021 marked the seventeenth year of the Campaign for Justice, and thanks to the leadership of this incredible team, it was one of our very best. All of us at the Maine Justice Foundation are incredibly thankful for Cesar and David’s dogged efforts to champion civil legal aid in Maine. Thank you, again—from all of us.

Angela Stinchfield
Director, Campaign for Justice

Volunteers are the Catalyst of our Success

Many factors contribute to the Campaign for Justice, but the countless hours, endless dedication and overwhelming positivity of our volunteers are by far the biggest keys to our success. To them, we extend our deepest thanks.

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"I support the Campaign because the strength of our civil legal aid organizations is a reflection of the character and integrity of all Maine attorneys. We have the power and ability to improve the lives of Mainers, often during the most trying period of their lives. I especially encourage my fellow new lawyers to get involved early. Every dollar and hour of volunteer service counts." —Elizabeth Marcotte Bjorn, Esq., Epstein & O'Donovan, LLP

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On its tenth anniversary, the Campaign for Justice created the Founders Circle to recognize those supporters who had donated to the campaign every year. We continue to acknowledge those who have donated for ten or more consecutive years. Thank you to all Founders Circle members for your steadfast support.

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Volunteer Lawyers Project: The Needs of Many Require Creative Solutions

As we reflect back on 2021 and look forward to 2022, the Volunteer Lawyers Project, along with the other legal aid providers, has faced new challenges and discovered new strategies and solutions to resolve them. During 2021, our programs that connect low-income Mainers with volunteer attorneys for legal assistance largely continued

to operate on a virtual platform. As the year went on, some of our dedicated volunteers did go back to some in person work at Maine courthouses. The pro bono attorneys and non-lawyer volunteers who assist people with protection from abuse matters resumed some in-person services in Portland and Lewiston courts, helping people who were facing emergency actions to protect families from abuse. We are so grateful to our dedicated volunteers who understand the urgent nature of these needs and who rise to the occasion. As we look into 2022, we are hopeful that we can continue to increase our in-person services, providing resources for people in need on a walk in basis in Maine's courts.

At the same time, as many businesses have realized, there are many advantages to using a virtual format to provide services. Our volunteer attorneys enjoy the convenience of meeting with clients remotely, saving both the lawyer and the client transportation costs and time. We can help many additional people who live outside of southern Maine for whom services were previously out of reach: pre-pandemic, our workers' rights and small claims legal clinics were only available in Portland. Now those resources are available to anyone statewide with an internet connection, and we have connected many Mainers around the state with these resources in the past year. We are cheering on the state initiatives to increase access to broadband in rural areas, as that will increase access to legal aid to those in rural areas. As we plan to reopen some in-person clinics in order to reduce barriers for those without internet or technology access, we will keep some of the remotely operating clinics in place as they have proved to be very popular.

Another unfortunate reality that 2021 brought us is an overwhelming demand for assistance. As we opened email and web-based channels to contact us for help, we had a very high volume of requests, each that must be responded to individually. Our creative staff have developed new procedures and ideas to manage this situation, such as an online intake form for family law cases, and we were able to secure some limited additional funding to hire a part time person just to manage communications with the public. We are hopeful that these new developments will allow us to serve the people of Maine more effectively going forward.

The scope of VLP services is wide. We have assisted people in a range of legal matters over the past year. In a long-fought battle, an elderly woman in Aroostook County was finally able to receive disability benefits and a large retroactive payment through the diligent efforts of her volunteer attorney over the course of three years. In our small business clinic, we connected a design studio in southern Maine to an attorney to assist with drafting a contract for use of an artist's work in their products. We helped a deaf client in Penobscot County prepare and file a small claims matter regarding damage to his vehicle. A twenty-five-year employee in Somerset County was fired for comments he made on social media, and a pro bono attorney advised him about protected activities under federal law and how to proceed with a claim. And a disabled, wheelchair bound, survivor of domestic abuse in Penobscot county was able to complete a divorce from her husband with the help of a dedicated volunteer attorney. These are just a few examples of the work that the hundreds of volunteer attorneys do every day through the VLP.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the donors to the Campaign for Justice for their support of access to justice for all Mainers.

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IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

ILAP Highlights the Afghan Crisis in Maine

The Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), Maine's only state-wide immigration legal services organization, advances justice and equity for immigrants and their families through direct legal services, community education, and systemic advocacy. Last fall, ILAP created an "Afghanistan Project" to provide legal guidance and assistance to Mainers trying to get their

loved ones in Afghanistan to safety, as well as Afghan parolees who were evacuated by the U.S. in August 2021 and resettled in Maine.

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer and subsequent Taliban takeover left families in Afghanistan fleeing for their lives and Afghans around the world, including here in Maine, reeling with fear for their loved ones. The tragedy was at the same time both sudden and expected. And once again, it revealed the unbearable costs of our broken immigration system. "In Afghanistan, all my life I have lost people. With the Taliban taking over, it is triggering all my trauma. I can't stop crying," shared ILAP client "N", whose identity is anonymized due to security risks for their family. Several of N's family members worked for the U.S. in Afghanistan and are now in hiding from the Taliban. Many of their family members have already been killed within the last two to three years, including four since the U.S. exit from Afghanistan last year. "I feel so hurt by the Taliban, but I have to talk about it to help my family."

Throughout the fall, ILAP met with dozens of community members like "N" to explore potential pathways for getting their loved ones in Afghanistan to safety. Unfortunately, traditional immigration options have failed to meet the urgency of the situation, so ILAP has joined with Afghan Community of Maine and other local partners, including Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition and Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic's RHRC (Refugee and Human Rights Clinic), to continue to push for policy and legislative solutions. Afghanistan Project Attorney Catherine Lindgren also sits on the national Evacuate Our Allies coalition and the American Immigration Lawyers Association's Afghan Response Task Force.

In the winter of 2021, ILAP began working with Maine's resettlement agencies to provide legal services to the Afghan evacuees and parolees we have welcomed to our state. It is likely that most of these community members will need to apply for asylum to access a green card or have any chance at reuniting with family members. And while it was initially expected that these cases would be reviewed under a faster and more straightforward process, it now appears that the procedure will require attorney expertise. Working with its Pro Bono Panel and other partners, ILAP will provide legal guidance and representation to as many families as possible so they can safely remain with their loved ones in Maine.

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Denial of Benefits Results in a Decades-Long Battle for Pine Tree Legal Assistance

"John" worked as a blueberry raker Downeast during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. After many years doing this backbreaking labor, John filed for Social Security retirement benefits and was told that despite working many long and hard seasons of agricultural work, his application for retirement benefits was denied.

During the 1960s-1980s, it was fairly common for farm employers to fail to make Social Security withholdings, either because workers were paid in cash or growers were trying to dodge government involvement in their operations. As a result, John had limited work history recorded with the Social Security Administration through no fault of his own.

The process for correcting Social Security work records is complicated and time-consuming. It involves gathering affidavits from former co-workers, field supervisors, and others in order to prove that someone worked at a particular farm, for a certain season, and a certain wage. These cases often involve many levels of appeals with the Social Security Administration.

John's case, and those of six other similar farmworkers, languished for almost two decades at various Social Security offices, passed from one claims specialist to another with no one taking any action.

In 2004, John turned to Pine Tree Legal Assistance for help. But John wasn't the only one: between 2004 and 2012, many more workers contacted Pine Tree Legal Assistance for help with similar cases.

Each case had ample factual supporting records, painstakingly completed long earlier. However, years of telephone calls and letters to the Social Security Administration by Pine Tree advocates went unanswered. On occasion, the Social Security Administration reported the cases as lost. Avenues of redress seemed elusive. All the while, the workers aged, and they and their families went without the retirement benefits they worked hard to earn.

By the summer of 2020, a Pine Tree lawyer began to wonder whether the Social Security Administration was systematically discriminating against these clients because they are Canadian First Nation members of the Mi'maq tribe. It seemed that Social Security was unwilling to treat these cases with the same attention and urgency as cases for white U.S. citizens.

With the clients' permission, a Pine Tree lawyer filed a discrimination complaint with Social Security's Office of General Counsel in August of 2020. This internal Social Security complaint process brought the matter to the attention of an investigatory unit based out of Boston.

Suddenly, after more than sixteen years, Social Security began paying attention to these farmworkers. Ultimately, Social Security denied that their behavior was discriminatory, but it acknowledged that taking so long to address any of these cases was unacceptable. The Office of General Counsel gave explicit instruction to the local office in Bangor to resolve the cases immediately. The Pine Tree lawyer was given access to the office supervisor and a dedicated claims specialist was assigned to all the cases.

Finally, in 2021, after several more months of Social Security difficulties and administrative challenges, things began to change. John and the other clients received their award letters, and they will receive retroactive benefits in total exceeding \$130,000. Their families finally have the benefits they deserve, thanks to the diligence of Pine Tree Legal Assistance.

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Free Legal Help for Maine's Seniors

Legal Services for the Elderly: Spotlighting Emergency Response

For the past two years, Legal Services for the Elderly has been on the forefront of a disturbing trend in civil legal aid: more and more of Maine's vulnerable population have faced a critical legal need. Considered emergencies, LSE has reconfigured its model of work to address these pressing needs.

It is no secret that older people have been disproportionately adversely affected by COVID-19 and are experiencing more legal problems now than was the case before the pandemic. However, what might be eye opening is just how urgent the situation is.

LSE has seen this disproportionate adverse impact firsthand, as the number of calls for help with priority/emergency legal matters shot up soon after the start of the pandemic and is currently at a level that is 35% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Emergencies includes cases where a person is living in an unsafe situation due to elder abuse, is threatened with loss of housing due to eviction or foreclosure, or is being denied critically needed public benefits. Emergency cases require an immediate response and are very resource intensive to handle.

In 2021, LSE responded to over 1,438 legal emergencies. This is compared to pre-pandemic levels of around 750 annually: a near-double increase. In addition, the severity of the situations being faced is much higher, particularly in the areas of housing and elder abuse.

One such case is that of Jody. Jody had taken out a reverse mortgage after her husband died. She had lived in her home for over thirty-five years. At age 87, and facing serious health issues, she started to fall behind on the property tax payments. The lender immediately filed for foreclosure. An LSE Staff Attorney reviewed Jody's situation and determined she qualified for an at-risk extension of her mortgage based upon her age and medical condition. This type of extension can be renewed annually, and Jody has been able to stay in her home.

Responding to cases like Jody's is incredibly important. But in order to ensure that no callers with emergencies were turned away without services, LSE restricted intake in 2021 for a wide variety of other types of problems. This lack of access to more proactive and preventative forms of legal advice and help is taking a hidden toll on the wellbeing of older adults in Maine, the full impact of which may not be realized for years to come.

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Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic

Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic: Human Rights Take Center Stage

The Refugee and Human Rights Clinic (RHRC), a program of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic for the past 10 years, focuses its work on assisting the most vulnerable of immigrants, whether individuals fleeing repressive dictatorships in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, those fleeing the terror caused by transnational gangs in Central America, or those fleeing violent regimes such as the Taliban in Afghanistan. And 2021 was no exception, as the RHRC pivoted its work to address several current crises.

Early in the fall semester, for example, the RHRC, working in close collaboration with ILAP, created an Afghan Outreach Project in response to the urgent humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. In addition to RHRC's five enrolled clinic students working on Humanitarian Parole cases, RHRC recruited and trained ten RHRC alumni and over thirty Maine Law student volunteers. Fourteen of the Maine Law volunteers and eight of the RHRC alumni represented various Afghan-Mainers in filing Humanitarian Parole applications for their relatives trying to flee Afghanistan. Additional students, faculty and multiple RHRC alumni also volunteered with ILAP and participated in their pro se workshops.

At the same time, impact litigation remained a focus of the RHRC's advocacy work. The RHRC continued to work actively on two cases pending before the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine involving efforts to compel production in response to Freedom of Information Act requests, including one case against USCIS related to asylum processes and decision making and another against Immigration and Customs Enforcement related to immigrant detention in Maine. Both cases remain pending. In addition, RHRC's two summer interns researched and drafted an amicus brief to the First Circuit (on behalf of immigration law professors and scholars from across the country) related to an asylum and Convention Against Torture claim. Oral arguments in that case took place in early December 2021.

To say the work of the RHRC is truly life-altering is not an exaggeration. The work RHRC has changed the course of many lives over the years. One such person is Ana.

Ana, a former Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) client was naturalized in early December. She first became a Clinic client more than 6 years ago, working with several different student attorneys at all stages of her long path to citizenship. She came to the United States alone, as a young teenager, after she fled violence in her home country and suffered the disappearance of her parents. After her arrival, student attorneys in the General Practice Clinic worked in collaboration with RHRC student attorneys in helping Ana in the first step of her path toward legal stability by obtaining a Predicate Order through a Maine Probate Court. Immediately after obtaining this Order, RHRC student attorneys filed her SIJS application with USCIS. USCIS approved Ana's SIJS and application for permanent residence following a hearing. Five years later, when Ana was eligible to naturalize, a new set of RHRC student attorneys assisted her with her application for naturalization. With great delight, her student attorney was with Ana at her naturalization ceremony and celebrated with Ana when she proudly became a U.S. citizen. She wrote to us: "I appreciate the amount of time invested in my case to make sure I feel supported and prepared at every step of the case."

The RHRC targets a critical gap in access to justice in Maine – providing direct legal representation to immigrants and refugees like Ana seeking political asylum and similar protections under federal law – while training future attorneys on how best to serve the legal needs of immigrants. While the RHRC's work can be quite challenging and time-intensive, the experience inspires students to continue to serve immigrants and refugees. Many RHRC alumni build on the skills and knowledge gained as student attorneys to launch careers in immigration law or to provide pro bono assistance to immigrants and refugees through ILAP or other programs. In this way, CLAC addresses immediate community needs through the hard work of its students, faculty, and volunteers, while expanding the legal community's capacity to address the urgent needs of those fleeing crisis situations.

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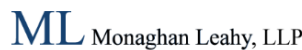
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Dental Care IS Health Care: Maine Equal Justice scores a big win in 2021



Maine Equal Justice, along with impacted community members, have long advocated for MaineCare to cover dental care for adults with low income as part of their health coverage. While recognizing dental care as part of someone's health care needs may seem like common sense, Maine Equal Justice had been advocating for this policy change for years. In 2021, after a multi-year campaign, this change garnered bipartisan support, was enacted, and is expected to impact over 200,000 Mainers across the state.

The denial of true dental care benefits to MaineCare recipients has had unquestionable affects. Prior to the passage of LD996, Maine was one of only ten states in our nation that offered emergency-only coverage for dental procedures for adults. At the same time, the needs of our state are incredibly large. In a 2015 study, for example, three out of four low-income adults in Maine who did not visit the dentist in the past year indicated cost was the reason.

Another factor in the fight for dental care is employment. 37% of low-income Mainers indicated that the condition of their mouth and teeth affects their ability to interview for a job. This suggests that a lack of dental coverage negatively affects employability prospects. Indeed, research shows that improved oral health is linked with increases in the likelihood of employment as well as lifetime earnings, particularly for women and low-income populations.

Beyond employability, oral care interventions have incredible long-term affects on general health. Conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and many other illnesses are inextricably linked to our teeth.

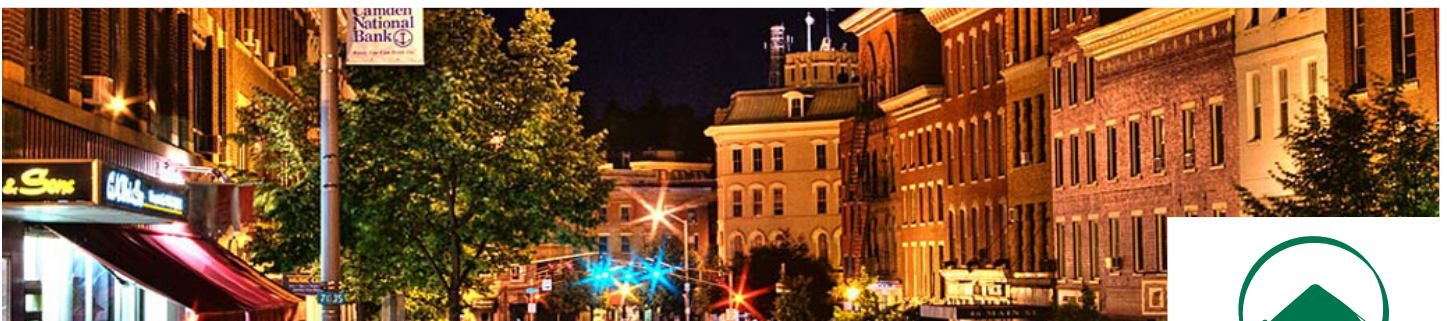
A study by Health Policy Institute¹ indicated that the net cost of deploying an adult dental benefit to MaineCare recipients would cost the State of Maine \$2.7 million dollars annually. In return, an economic impact would be greatly amplified – over \$21 million dollars. This benefit draws largely upon the providers and facilities who would administer the services and is a powerful argument in the fight for dental care.

Armed with these facts, Maine Equal Justice, many other constituents and legislative champions once again took up the cause for dental care in 2021, and this time emerged triumphant. Because of the passage of LD996, more than 200,000 Mainers will have dental care benefits beginning this year – an incredible benefit, and the first expansion to Maine's dental care provisions in over thirty years.

Robyn Merrill, Executive Director of Maine Equal Justice, gives much credit to the constituents who showed up faithfully, time and time again, to share their stories about the need for dental care. Because of them, she shares, adult MaineCare members will finally be able to access this life-changing benefit in July 2022.

As a next step, Maine Equal Justice is working with the MaineCare Advisory Council to implement the policy and are working to address MaineCare rates so that more dental providers will accept MaineCare patients. Maine Equal Justice will also do outreach and education across the state to ensure that people who are impacted and the folks who work with them are aware of this change in policy and the fact that adults covered by MaineCare now qualify for dental coverage—and can get the care they have been unable to get until now..

¹ https://www.maineconhn.org/assets/docs/ADA_HPI_Estimating_the_Cost_of_MADB_in_Maine_FINAL.pdf?p=publications/ADA_HPI_Estimating_the_Cost_of_MADB_in_Maine_FINAL.pdf



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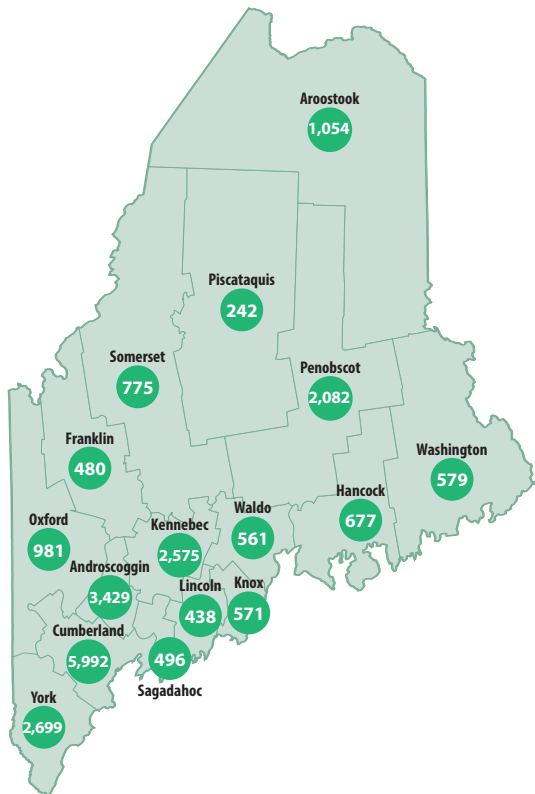
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This is the number of CASES reported to the Maine Justice Foundation for 2021, by county. The number of PEOPLE impacted is much larger—over 300,000.

County

Androscoggin	3,429
Aroostook	1,054
Cumberland	5,992
Franklin	480
Hancock	677
Kennebec	2,575
Knox	571
Lincoln	438
Oxford	981
Penobscot	2,082
Piscataquis	242
Sagadahoc	496
Somerset	775
Waldo	561
Washington	579
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Total 23,631



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