

Beacon of Justice

2023 Awardees

2023 Beacon of Justice Awards

NLADA's Beacon of Justice Awards honor members of the pro bono legal community who are tireless advocates for equal justice. Each year the awards highlight one area of pro bono work that dovetails with NLADA's mission of equal access to justice. The 2023 Awards feature law firms who are addressing issues related to LGBTQ+ rights and/or gender-based equity issues that intersect with racial equity. At NLADA, we understand the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and sexual orientation that create interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Racial equity work that focuses at the intersection of these social justice issues is very important, and we want to shine a spotlight on firms undertaking these important challenges.

Accordingly, in an effort to be more intentionally inclusive in defining racial equity in 2023, we aim to highlight firms engaging in pro bono work where LGBTQ+ and/or gender equity issues intersect with racial equity in a myriad of ways within their communities and/or on the national level. We also are particularly interested in how the private bar actively engages in related projects to solve broader issues of systemic inequities.

Eligible law firms provided pro bono legal assistance to families, individuals, organizations, community groups, or others, between January 1 and December 31, 2022.

Watch the 2023 Beacon of Justice award video at:
<https://youtu.be/zCO7Gksqblq>

61,300+

The total number of Pro Bono hours for LGBTQ+ rights and/or gender-based equity issues that intersect with racial equity by 2023 Beacon of Justice winners

Artist Spotlight:

Lisa Marie Studio creates murals, paintings and designs that celebrate diversity, empower abundance and share love. We help communities, individuals and businesses create their best neighborhoods, spaces and products by using vibrant color, inspiring imagery and bold geometry to communicate values and equity, respect and harmony.

Led by award winning LGBTQ+ artist, activist and creative director Lisa Marie Thalhammer, her team works both locally and internationally, creating well-known works such as "The LOVE Mural". They are currently on a mission to paint rainbow love murals in all 50 states and beyond



connecting the country and the world through love and color. Check out the artwork at www.lisamariestudio.com and on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#)!

On the cover: "LOVE," Lisa Marie Thalhammer



Images courtesy Lisa Marie Studios

AkinSM

Akin's longest-running active impact litigation matter directly addresses the intersectionality of race-based and gender-based discrimination. Since early 2020, a team of litigators in our Houston and New York offices, in partnership with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, has been fighting a discriminatory hair grooming policy in a lawsuit against the Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD), on behalf of our clients, De'Andre Arnold and Kaden Bradford.

For years, the students had worn their hair in locs as an expression of their Black identity and West Indian cultural heritage. BHISD administrators harassed the students, singling them out for hair checks, making negative comments about their hair, and keeping close watch on the students during the school day. BHISD modified its hair grooming policy multiple times, gradually changing what they deemed to be the appropriate length for boys' hair and restricting the types of hair accessories that could be worn by boys. Ultimately, the students secured their locs with a headband and rubber bands to comply with the policy.

The constant harassment and shifting expectations created a difficult learning environment for De'Andre and Kaden. On one occasion, De'Andre's locs

loosened and fell below his collar, which violated the policy. He immediately refastened his locs but was removed from class. Female students and non-Black students were not subject to such harsh treatment.

During the 2019-2020 school year, BHISD modified its hair policy again, further restricting the appropriate length for boys' hair. The length requirements in the policy, as revised, made it impossible for the students to wear their locs. The revised policy did not similarly regulate female students' hair.

Ultimately, De'Andre and Kaden withdrew from BHISD to avoid further discrimination and disruption to their education, causing significant trauma and turmoil to their emotional health and development. In May 2020, the team filed suit against BHISD, alleging racial and sex-based discrimination in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, and the First Amendment, as well as violations of Texas state law.

In August 2020, the court granted a preliminary injunction, finding that the clients were likely to succeed on their claims of sex and race discrimination. Since then mediation with BHISD has proved unfruitful. Discovery is ongoing, with trial set to move forward in late summer. Notably, although BHISD has been unwilling to change its hair, other schools in the area have taken note of this litigation and have voluntarily revised their policies, ensuring that Black male students are able to express themselves freely.



"The NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund asked Akin to help two Black high school students who were told that they had to cut their locs to continue participating classes and other school functions. We heeded the call to fight this discriminatory policy, and obtained an injunction to keep these young men in school. The case is continuing toward a final trial this fall. — Steven Schulman, Pro Bono Partner

BakerHostetler

We are proud of the incredible volume of pro bono work done by BakerHostetler attorneys. In 2022 alone, attorneys across all our core practice groups put in nearly 20,000 hours to help people and organizations achieve outcomes that would otherwise have been out of their reach. We dedicate considerable focus in advocacy for and allyship with the LGBTQ+ community, and our pro bono efforts on behalf of several organizations are particularly noteworthy.

We partner with The Human Rights Campaign in its Strategic Impact Litigation Initiative. Following passage of the Affordable Care Act, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) promulgated a rule protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in healthcare. During the Trump administration, HHS rescinded those protections. We represent two transgender women of color to enjoin HHS' rollback of the anti-discrimination protections. After filing a complaint in the Eastern District of New York, we filed a motion seeking a preliminary injunction to enjoin the rollback, argued the motion before the District Court and were granted a temporary restraining order. This was the first decision in the nation granting an injunction. HHS appealed, and the case is currently stayed as the Biden administration promulgates new rules expected to reinstate the Obama-era protections.

We are also helping Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG) as it supports LGBTQ+ individuals in Mexico who are fleeing unsafe circumstances in their home countries. Because of U.S. regulations established during the pandemic, many of these asylum seekers are still under threat as they wait in Mexico. A team of BakerHostetler attorneys has been preparing and submitting remote requests to Customs and Border Protection for humanitarian parole/entry, which allows these asylum seekers to join family and friends in the U.S. as they await adjudication of their claims. We have helped six LGBTQ+ asylum seekers get paroled into the U.S. so far. In 2022 we successfully obtained

"BakerHostetler's commitment to standing against discrimination and for equality is demonstrated by thousands of hours of legal services our lawyers and professional staff provide annually to underserved and underrepresented communities. We are humbled by this recognition and remain committed to ensuring access to justice and equity in the legal system."

— Edward J. Jacobs, Partner

U.S. citizenship for two LGBTQ+ asylees who were forced to flee Pakistan because of threats from the Taliban over their sexual orientation or relationship. Their naturalization, in December 2022, ended a nearly decade-long engagement that saw our team help these clients apply for asylum status, prove their innocence when they were arrested based on false accusations in the U.S., obtain permanent residency and ultimately become U.S. citizens.

While the impact of all this work can't be quantified, there's no doubt that "it has had an enormous effect on many people's lives and helped establish significant precedents on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community."

Baker McKenzie.

The Baker McKenzie Pro Bono practice has launched and participated in a number of high-impact initiatives that address racial and gender-based disparities through the protection of LGBTQ+ rights, ensuring equal opportunities within communities, and combating racism.

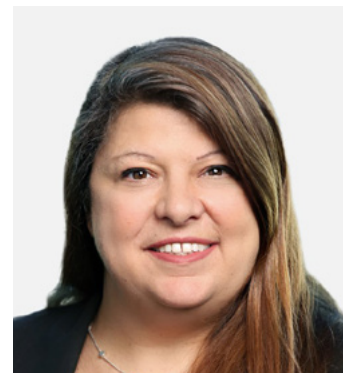
Through our revolutionary, globally-recognized Justice in Action (JiA) initiative, we are producing Real Rights: A City-By-City Guide for Youth Interacting with Police. This resource helps youth in contact with law enforcement to have a clear handle on what the law says the police can and cannot do and what young people must do to assert their own rights. It also contains information about state, federal and municipal laws and how young people can assert their rights. This project is focused on big cities where black and brown children, youth and adults engage with the police more often and with dangerous results.

Alongside JiA we are examining the so-called "Conversion Therapy" laws and practices in select countries to assist youth seeking resolution of a visa or asylum application in the US. This project is focused on country conditions that include these false "psychological" treatments and how they are used to hurt children based on a theory that they can falsely stop them from being LGBTQ+.

We are working with Lambda Legal's Youth In Out-of-Home Care team to develop a legal map detailing questions that LGBTQ+ youth express every day on topics such as medical consent, ability to contract, emancipation, public accommodations, antidiscrimination laws and more. This project is focused on compiling research to ultimately publish

on Lambda Legal's website as an accessible and reliable tool for young people and providers who work with LGBTQ+ youth.

In the alignment with our Firm's work to create a state-by-state series of Homeless Youth Handbooks across the nation, we have always sought to give young people legal information about their rights, including their health and reproductive rights in chapters in each Handbook called Pregnancy & Parenting. In light of recent changes in law, we are both updating each of the chapters in existing Handbooks as well as creating these informational chapters urgently needed by young people in states where no Handbook has yet been published. At the sprint, volunteers will craft these chapters answering key questions for young people who need to understand pregnancy and parenting rights.



*Angela Vigil,
Pro Bono Partner &
Executive Director of the
Pro Bono Practice*



*Jaclyn Pampel,
Pro Bono Partner*



Crowell has focused on several pro bono initiatives this past year focused at the intersection of LGBTQ+, gender and racial justice. Modeled off of the success of its Racial Justice Pro Bono Task Force and in response to the Dobbs decision, Crowell launched a Reproductive Rights Pro Bono Task Force in 2022 to advance the cause of reproductive rights and resist erosion of hard-won rights for our LGBTQ+ citizens. The RR Task Force institutionalized the Firm's long-term commitment to pro bono work that promotes reproductive rights. Building on its preexisting expertise, Crowell has also increased its pro bono immigration work at the intersection of LGBTQ+, gender and racial equity issues. Finally, Crowell has made an increased commitment to name-change matters for transgender individuals.

In addition to establishing a Reproductive Rights Pro Bono Task Force in 2022, Crowell continued to provide pro bono legal services to organizations and individuals committed to securing reproductive rights to all, including numerous engagements on behalf of the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) and litigation. Prior to Dobbs, the Firm litigated a successful TRO in Kentucky barring enforcement of a restrictive abortion statute on constitutional grounds. Crowell advised CRR on a host of reproductive health-related issues, including providing pro bono legal counseling on regulatory law issues relating to the delivery of medication abortions and federal protections for reproductive



health rights. Crowell was also a founding member of the Bar Association of San Francisco's Legal Alliance for Reproductive Rights (LARR), a volunteer effort by law firms that intend to provide free legal services to those who will be affected by the Dobbs decision.

Crowell continues to focus on LGBTQ+ and gender-based immigration work. After the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Crowell partnered with Tahirih Justice to Center to provide pro bono asylum representation to a group of women's rights activists evacuated by the U.S. State Department. The firm has taken on multiple gender-based affirmative asylum matters through this initiative.

In November, Crowell's Chicago office hosted a first of its kind LGBTQ+ U Visa Clinic with the National Immigrant Justice Center in reaction to the record number of incidents of violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people over the past year. Through the clinic, Crowell attorneys are assisting five immigrant individuals who were victims of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes or sexual violence in applying for their U Visas.

Crowell's New York Office has taken on half-a-dozen name-change matters through the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund over the past year and have provided their clients with invaluable identity-affirming pro bono representation.



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Dechert LLP

In line with Dechert's longstanding commitment to pro bono, the firm's lawyers logged 92,000 pro bono hours worldwide in 2022. A significant proportion of those efforts were aimed at issues surrounding LGBTQ+, gender and racial justice.

Dechert assisted OutRight International by filing an amicus curiae brief to the Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in support of Olivera Fuentes and his same-sex partner, who had suffered discriminatory treatment while customers at a supermarket in Peru in 2004. Fuentes sought redress through Peru's judicial system without success; after seven years, his case reached the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, where Dechert argued for a watershed ruling that would establish precedent in international human rights law on the issue of public displays of affection by LGBTQ+ persons, and of States' responsibility to ensure private compliance with State human rights obligations; OutRight International is awaiting the court's final judgment.

We addressed an issue that can prove troublesome for many transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals: a mismatch between their

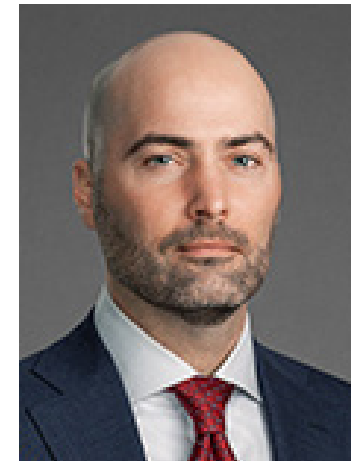
given names and their appearance. Securing a legally binding name change can be arduous and costly. To address the issue, Dechert helped with the launch of new name and gender change clinics in New York and Washington D.C., so far helping 20+ individuals change their names.

After being approached by Sanctuary for Families, Dechert joined a multi-firm defense team for a domestic-violence victim, Tracy McCarter, who was arrested after her estranged husband died from a single stab wound at her apartment. At the time of the engagement, McCarter, a nurse, had been denied bail. The team secured her release from jail, and gathered evidence of a history of physical abuse perpetrated by her estranged husband. This evidence, along with forensic evidence regarding the stab wound and the fact that McCarter had attempted life-saving aid, supported the view that she lacked the requisite intent for a murder charge and had acted in self-defense.

The District Attorney indicted for murder nonetheless, leading Dechert to arrange for McCarter to meet with the DA himself to recount, in her own words, the events surrounding her husband's death. Despite opposition from the presiding judge, the DA dropped all charges shortly before trial. The dismissal vindicated the client — and raised awareness of how many domestic-abuse survivors are unfairly incarcerated.



“Dechert LLP appreciates The National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in communities and addressing the critical legal issues related to LGBTQ+, gender, and racial justice. We are honored to be recognized with their Beacon of Justice Award.” — Suzie Turner, Partner



David Freeburg

“DLA Piper is proud to support members of the LGBTQ community locally and abroad, particularly through our dedicated LGBTQ pro bono effort, called Iris Represents. A steadfast commitment to justice includes protecting the rights of the most vulnerable. We strive to do that in our representation of LGBTQ immigrants, among other projects.”

— David Freeburg, Of Counsel



DLA Piper's pro bono mission is to pursue justice in our communities and around the world by advancing gender and racial equality, advocating for children, and combatting hunger.

As part of our gender justice efforts, we engage in work across the United States supporting members of the LGBT community who are racially diverse. Through our immigration practice, we often represent individuals fleeing violence because of their gender or sexual orientation. We recently won asylum for a bisexual man who fled his home after he and his boyfriend were attacked by an anti-gay mob. In another case, we won asylum for a professional soccer player who fled after two brutal beatings by anti-gay mobs that included the murder of his boyfriend. One of our attorneys, David Freeburg, has represented over a

dozen asylum seekers from across the world with a particular focus on LGBT asylum seekers, most of whom were racially diverse.

Our work has also included collaborating with the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund, Lambda Legal in Texas, FreeState Justice, and others. We help LGBT individuals through the process of changing their legal names and gender markers, assist service members who receive Other Than Honorable discharges from the military based on their sexual orientation, work on behalf of LGBT youth, and advocate for the rights of transgender people in detention. We are currently assisting Lambda Legal with a research project involving detained or homeless youth — a population that is also disproportionately black and brown.

Finally, our transactional lawyers help by providing pro bono support to entrepreneurs who are part of StartOut Growth Lab, a startup accelerator for companies that are founded or co-founded by LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs. Additionally, we represented an organization that connects families with public health researchers who are exploring the health and happiness of gay parents' children verses children of straight parents.



Fried Frank is highly committed to providing impactful pro bono legal assistance to the LGBTQ+ community. We continue our longstanding advocacy efforts challenging laws and policies that restrict access to reproductive health services, deny bodily autonomy and target the LGBTQ+ community. We lead pro bono efforts ranging from groundbreaking family law litigations involving same-sex couples to name-change petitions for transgender clients. We support and maintain strong relationships with key organizations like TLDEF, Lambda Legal, Immigration Equality, Whitman Walker Health, LGBTQ+ Bar and the ACLU. Recently, we began a partnership with the NY Legal Aid Society to host a monthly name change clinic at Ali Forney Center's headquarters in Harlem. This partnership has created additional pro bono work-our lawyers are now challenging the NYC Department of Correction's refusal to publicly release their housing policy for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals incarcerated in city facilities.

Advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community is a firmwide responsibility. Most recently, more than 100 Fried Frank attorneys participated in a training on transgender cultural competency given by TLDEF, which kicks off a pro bono clinic to complete legal name change applications for low-income transgender New Yorkers. Furthermore, Fried Frank provides pro bono legal counsel to LGBTQ+ individuals navigating the immigration process and has partnered with Immigration Equality on these efforts and currently represents an LGBTQ+ asylee from Honduras before the Immigration Court.

Advocating for low-income communities of color navigating legal, immigration, and other racially



*Karen Grisez,
Pro Bono Counsel*

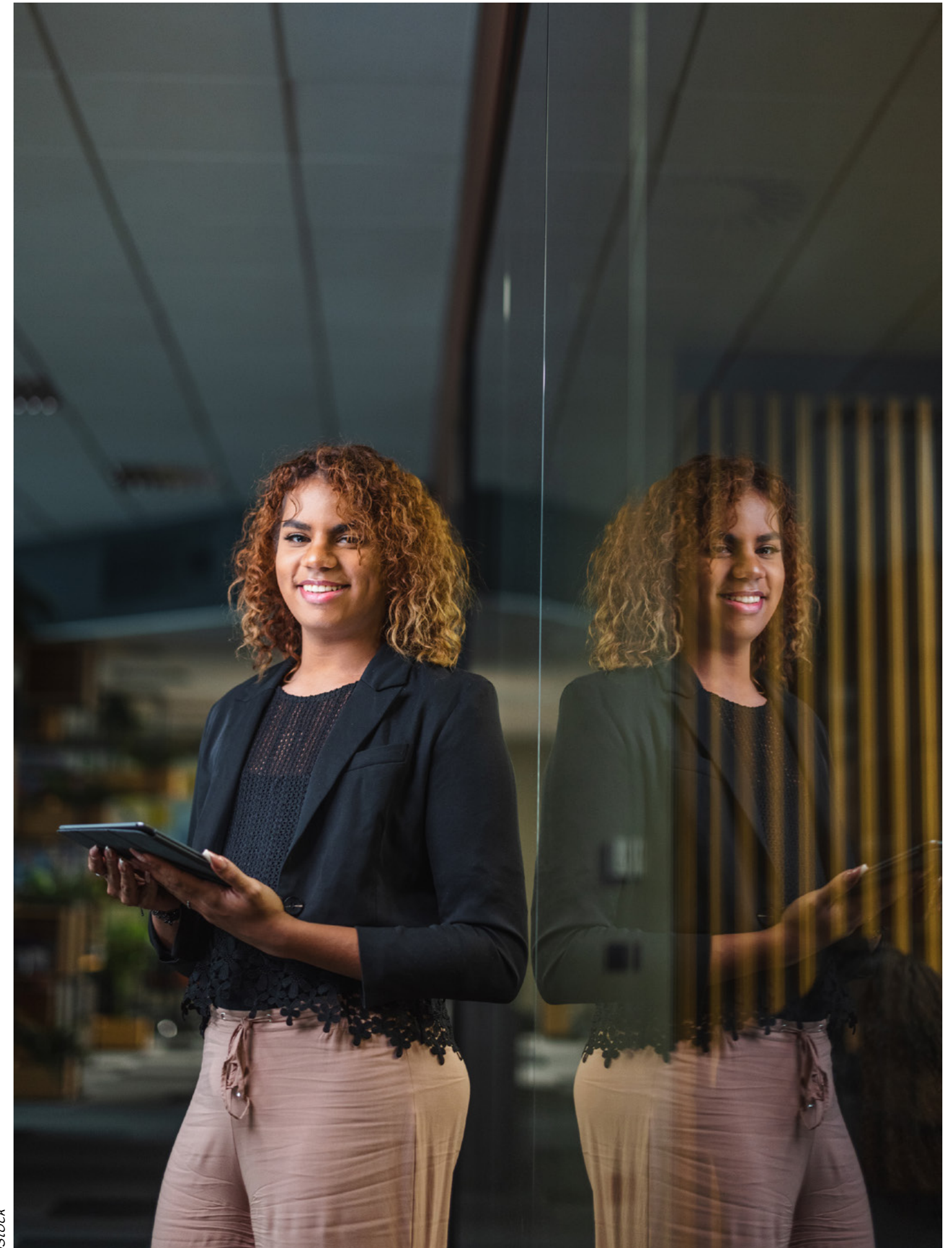


*Laura Israel Sinrod,
Pro Bono Counsel*

"Whether we're litigating in the Family Court, drafting an amicus brief for the Supreme Court, or advising a small business or nonprofit in an underserved community, we bring our unwavering commitment to recognizing systemic racism and fighting for racial and gender equity through pro bono work."

— Laura Israel Sinrod, Pro Bono Counsel

discriminatory systems in design and application is a hallmark of our pro bono program. The Fried Frank Civil Rights Fellowship brings together private law firm litigation and public service law by connecting the firm with two of the country's leading civil rights advocacy organizations, the NAACP LDF and MALDEF. The Fellowship enables an entry-level lawyer to spend two years as a Fried Frank litigator and two years as a staff attorney with an advocacy organization. We also work with other leading civil rights organizations to challenge infringements on voting rights and assist individual clients and clinic participants needing naturalization or advocacy. For example, we represent various plaintiffs in challenging Texas Senate Bill No. 1, which makes it more difficult for voters with disabilities and non-English-speaking voters to cast ballots in Texas. The firm is a founding member of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, and our attorneys are active in the organization's committee leadership. A DC associate wrote the introductory chapter for an LFAA report on the history of race discrimination in our immigration laws.





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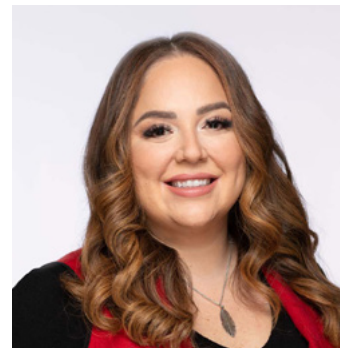
Hanson Bridgett demonstrated its commitment to advancing LGBTQ+, gender-based, and racial equity in 2022 through hundreds of hours of pro bono work providing direct legal services to individuals and taking on impact litigation, which in one significant matter involved doing both at the same time.

In May 2022, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision in favor of our client, a gay Nigerian man who had sought asylum in the US after a death warrant was issued against him in his native village because he had been caught with his boyfriend in a hotel. He was initially denied asylum by an immigration judge because he provided a false name when asked to identify the hotel where he had been caught. The Board of Immigration Appeals affirmed the immigration court ruling. Our firm took on the appeal pro bono to the Ninth Circuit, where the court held that our client's initial misrepresentation of the name of the hotel was not a material element of his asylum claim, and remanded the case back to the immigration court for a decision on the merits.

In another important piece of impact litigation affecting LGBTQ+ rights, our firm worked pro bono on



*Samir Abdelnour,
Director of Pro Bono &
Social Impact*



*Jennifer Martinez, Chief
Diversity, Equity &
Inclusion Officer*

a US Supreme Court amicus brief filed on behalf of a group of behavioral science and economics scholars. That case involves a challenge to a Colorado law aimed at prohibiting private business from discriminating against LGBTQ+ customers. Our brief, filed in August 2022, refutes an argument made by opponents of the state's anti-discrimination statute that the law is unnecessary because the free market will protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case in December 2022, and a decision is expected this year.

In addition to these high-profile "impact" cases, Hanson Bridgett also worked to address LGBTQ+ and gender-based and racial equity through direct service representation for several pro bono clients in 2022. We helped a 27-year old transgender man legally change his name and gender marker to affirm his identity, and we helped a Mexican transgender man seeking asylum obtain a work permit while his asylum application is pending. After obtaining a court order reopening an immigration court proceeding to reconsider a removal order for a gay pro bono client from El Salvador, we helped that client obtain a work permit while his case is pending.

“We have the power to create a more just and equitable society for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and we’re proud to show it in our pro bono and community service work. We are honored to be recognized again as a Beacon of Justice and will continue challenging ourselves to meet NLADA’s high standards of service to our communities.”

— Samir Abdelnour, Director of Pro Bono and Social Impact



King & Spalding is proud to focus much of its pro bono work on serving underrepresented communities to help realize the firm’s diversity goals. In particular, our pro bono program has had a strong focus on work with the LGBTQ+ community, work on racial justice, and work that empowers women. We are particularly proud of the instances where our work in these areas intersect, such as assisting non-profit organizations that seek to uplift and empower women of color within their communities as well as civil rights litigation on behalf of transgender individuals of color.

Last year, we assisted Latinas in Tech, a non-profit organization whose aim is to create a tech industry where Latinas are well represented throughout all levels, with drafting and reviewing over 10 different agreements and assisted with updates to their governance documents. Similarly, we assisted Diversity Uplifts, Inc. with drafting and reviewing a service agreement through which trained doulas could assist women in underserved communities through the birthing process. Diversity Uplifts, Inc.’s mission is to improve the well-being of women, birthing people, children and families by supporting marginalized and minority communities, while increasing cultural competency and humility among providers who serve them.

Along with our work with non-profit organizations, we have provided pro bono litigation services to secure civil rights and access to appropriate healthcare for transgender people of color. Two impact litigation cases in particular highlight these pro bono efforts. We represented a certified class of over 100 transgender

“We are very proud of the pro bono work we have done for LGBTQ clients, particularly in matters that intersect with racial justice and advance gender equity. We are strongly committed to all three areas, and are working hard to achieve positive outcomes for these clients.”

— Joshua C. Toll, Pro Bono Partner

individuals incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) in a § 1983 lawsuit against IDOC for denial of adequate treatment for gender dysphoria in violation of the Eighth Amendment because IDOC delayed or denied hormone therapy, evaluation for gender-affirming surgery, placement in gender-affirming facilities, providing gender-affirming clothing and grooming items, and use of gender-affirming pronouns. Following four days of evidence, the Court issued a rare ruling from the bench, permanently enjoining IDOC from delaying or denying class members medically-necessary care to treat gender dysphoria. This injunction affects the policies and practices of every state prison in Illinois, where over half of the people incarcerated in Illinois are black. In another case, we brought a lawsuit against the Georgia Department of Community Health on behalf of two transgender black women who were denied Georgia Medicaid coverage for medically-necessary gender-affirming surgery, despite the same procedures being covered for other beneficiaries. As part of resolving the case in 2022, the Georgia Department of Community Health agreed to cover gender affirming surgery for all Georgia Medicaid beneficiaries, nearly half of whom are black or Hispanic.



From left:

*Abby Parson, Partner;
Adam Reinke, Partner;
Neil Eggleston, Partner*

KIRKLAND & ELLIS

In 2022, Kirkland devoted significant pro bono time and resources to matters related to gender-based equity.

Dozens of Kirkland attorneys teamed up with the Asian University for Women (AUW), an institution that seeks to educate and empower women leaders in Asia through a liberal arts and sciences education, to help Afghan women students apply for asylum and find a legal path to U.S. residency following the Taliban's return to power. Kirkland represented 10 women, screening them for eligibility using an interpreter, filling out their paperwork, preparing them for their interviews and hearings, and attending hearings with them. Once in America, these women have transferred to Arizona State University and DePaul University to continue their studies, while awaiting immigration decisions.

Meanwhile, 15 Kirkland attorneys and summer associates joined a project with the 30 Birds Foundation, working to evacuate girls from one of Afghanistan's first co-ed schools in Kabul. In early 2022, half of the school's students made it to Saskatoon, Canada, but the other half fled to Pakistan, where they began applying for Canadian visas. The Kirkland team devoted several hundreds of hours to

helping the second half of these Afghan girls prepare their applications. The first group of students arrived safely in Canada in August 2022, bringing the total number of evacuees assisted by the project to 450.

Throughout 2022, Kirkland also partnered with Immigration Equality on dozens of cases representing LGBTQ+ individuals in their quest to flee gender- and sexual orientation-based violence and persecution in their home countries. In one case that demonstrates the life-changing nature of this work, a Kirkland team represented Ms. A, a lesbian from El Salvador, a country where gay women are physically and sexually abused by police officers, soldiers, gangs and family members. Kirkland submitted an amicus curiae brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in support of Ms. A's petition to reverse and remand an adverse Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) decision denying her requests for asylum.

The Firm argued Ms. A would likely suffer further persecution on account of her sexual orientation. Kirkland also highlighted the Ninth Circuit's holding that sexual orientation is an immutable characteristic that one should not be forced to hide or change, and argued that legal precedent and social science confirm that concealing one's sexual orientation is psychologically harmful. They further argued that forcing an applicant to suppress their sexual orientation is a form of persecution. In May 2022, the Ninth Circuit granted a motion filed by the government to remand the matter to the BIA.



“Kirkland is a grateful recipient of the 2023 Beacon of Justice Award. We’ve been both humbled and inspired by our work with Afghan girls and women who, facing the threat of gender-based violence and restrictions on their education after the Taliban takeover, fled to the U.S. and Canada seeking safety and an opportunity to continue their schooling.”

— Jacqueline Haberfeld, Global Director and Pro Bono Counsel



Christopher S. Auguste



Kramer Levin

Kramer Levin is a leader among law firms in pro bono and community service work for LGBTQ+ rights, and in particular has made a major commitment to fighting for the rights of lesbian, gay, and transgender asylum seekers — work that lies firmly at the intersection of LGBTQ, gender, and racial equality.

In August 2022, Kramer Levin filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of mainstream faith groups in *303 Creative v. Elenis*, concerning a website designer's asserted right to refuse, on free speech grounds, to design a same-sex couple's wedding website, which would otherwise violate Colorado's anti-discrimination statute. The amicus brief documents growing support among mainstream U.S. religions for fair and equal treatment for LGBTQ individuals and families, opposes arguments by the website designer and others that enforcing the nondiscrimination obligations impinges upon free speech, and explains how the case undermines nondiscrimination laws, permitting dignitary injury to same-sex couples.

Working with Immigration Equality, Kramer Levin is currently representing over a dozen LGBTQ+ applicants. The firm recently obtained asylum for a gay, HIV+, non-binary Jamaican. The refugee was repeatedly attacked and persecuted in Jamaica for their sexual orientation and gender identity,

“We are honored to be recognized by NLADA for our longstanding and unwavering commitment to fighting for LGBTQ+ rights and helping to promote gender-based equity and racial equity. It is both humbling and gratifying to find ourselves among so many deserving award recipients. We are all in this together.”

— Christopher S. Auguste,

Partner and Diversity Committee Co-chair

including being stabbed, stoned, and slashed with a machete. This case was complicated because, after fleeing Jamaica, the client returned to help their partner escape, since the partner lacked the financial means and was also being persecuted. ICE initially argued that this was evidence that Kramer Levin's client did not genuinely fear being returned to Jamaica. ICE withdrew its opposition after moving testimony in Immigration Court, where the client explained they were terrified to return to Jamaica, yet that they would have risked anything to save their partner. This is but one example of work Kramer Levin does every day at the intersection of LGBTQ rights and racial and gender justice.

Partnering with the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund, Kramer Levin attorneys have in recent years helped several dozen transgender clients (including six in 2022) obtain legal name changes and appropriate identity documents — crucial to their survival and well-being. These clients as well were overwhelmingly low-income people of color.

Beyond its litigation work, Kramer Levin also serves as pro bono general counsel for the LGBT Community Center, as well as continuing to counsel GMHC, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, and other community service organizations serving diverse, low-income populations.



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LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

Latham & Watkins is a leading global law firm dedicated to helping clients achieve their most complex business goals. We have developed one of the world's most innovative pro bono programs, with 95% of our US lawyers participating in pro bono in 2022.

Latham has long acted to protect the LGBTQ+ community's civil rights, and our work takes many forms — from individual representations to high-impact litigation. One of our biggest successes in recent years was securing a victory in a federal lawsuit against the US government's ban on transgender individuals in the military, on behalf of Equality California and several transgender military members. The lawsuit sought to ensure that all qualified Americans have an equal opportunity to serve in the US military, that transgender individuals are free from arbitrary and invidious discrimination, and that the constitutional rights of transgender individuals to autonomy, privacy, and freedom of expression are protected.

We regularly provide legal health checks in which we review nonprofit operations and governance for legal compliance. We have focused on supporting organizations such as the Black Trans Foundation, which works for the social advancement of Black trans people in the UK; the National AIDS Trust, which advocates for those living with, affected by, or at risk of HIV; and OutRight Action International, an NGO that addresses human rights violations and abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people.

“At Latham, we have long advocated to protect the LGBTQ+ community’s civil and human rights, with our pro bono program reflecting our collective desire to right wrongs and increase access to justice.”

— Anne Robinson, Partner & Global Chair, Pro Bono Committee



We also advocate on behalf of individual clients, challenging employment discrimination and ensuring client's physical safety in prison and elder care, and have helped nonprofits prepare anti-bullying and other educational materials. We've also worked to secure funding for LGBTQ+ organizations, drafted amicus briefs, and offered them direct legal and business services support. As part of our continuing commitment to assist nonprofits dedicated to serving the LGBTQ+ community, we have advised organizations like Consortium, which works with 375 LGBTQ+ charities and groups in the United Kingdom the largest such network in the UK to support their delivery of direct services and campaign for LGBTQ+ rights around the country.

This year, we advised The Trevor Project, a crisis intervention and suicide prevention organization focused on helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning young people, as the nonprofit seeks to expand into Mexico. Founded in 1998, The Trevor Project is the leading organization working to end suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. Its newly inaugurated Mexican chapter offers 24/7 Spanish-language crisis intervention services through online chat functions, text, and WhatsApp, and is the first chapter in the organization's history that has offered crisis counseling to individuals outside of the US. Latham advised on the structure and financing for the Mexican entity and its relationship with The Trevor Project entities in the US. We also devoted employment law expertise and assessed the scope of the organization's IP agreements and license relating to the Mexico expansion.

“McCarter & English is proud to support the LGBTQ+ community through its pro bono program and other firm initiatives, and celebrates the progress NLADA has fostered in gender and racial equity.”

— Michelle Pallak Movahed, Partner & head of the firm's Pro Bono practice



McCarter & English's commitment to LGBTQ+ equity is decades-long and multidisciplinary, and our pro bono practice is one of the most crucial manifestations of that commitment. Our humanitarian immigration practice has long prioritized service to LGBTQ+ individuals seeking safety in the United States from all over the world, with a particular focus on people fleeing Jamaica and West Africa. For many of our LGBTQ+ immigration clients, the scope of our representation has necessarily gone beyond the immigration system; for example, our transgender clients have needed to secure identification documents that reflect their true selves and we have been honored to assist in that process.

In about 2017, we launched a firmwide pro bono project specifically focused on serving low-income transgender individuals with name and gender marker changes, to help them make sure their documentation matched their identity. The project trains volunteer attorneys in cultural competency as well as the logistics of a name change, to ensure we are delivering services at the highest level. Over the years, in New Jersey, in particular, we have been struck by the unmet need in this area of practice: when Garden State Equality announced our partnership with them to serve trans individuals with name and gender marker changes, they were flooded with requests for assistance from all over the state. So, in 2022, we began looking for ways to deliver services to more people, additional to our ongoing full representation of transgender individuals in seeking court-ordered name changes. Consistent with our firm's emphasis on racial equity, and recognizing the particular vulnerability to violence of transgender individuals of color, we prioritized communities of



McCarter & English staff

color. Working in collaboration with Garden State Equality and the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Rahway, we created a monthly clinic to reach patients receiving gender affirming care at the hospital. In the three months following the clinic's inauguration, our dedicated team helped roughly forty people on-site at the hospital. Around this time, we began talks with Essex County to move forward with a transgender name change clinic, and we look forward to developing a similar program in Newark, New Jersey, this year.



MINTZ

Mintz's pro bono work intentionally serves underrepresented communities of people every day. Through the firm's guidance, marginalized individuals are given fairer access to the legal services they need to help them survive and thrive. Mintz has fought hard to help and protect women, women of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals through its efforts and outreach.

Mintz is assisting The League of Women for Community Service (LWCS), one of the longest continuously running Black women's organizations in America, in real estate matters related to renovations of its historic Boston headquarters enabling it to continue serving as a forum for informing the public about pertinent issues that affect the social, economic and general well-being of the Black community.

To address gender violence, Mintz represents Ujima, a national organization at the forefront of new training and outreach tools to reduce violence against and homicides of Black women. Mintz additionally works with Fortify Rights, an international human rights organization addressing domestic violence in Cambodia. And Mintz lawyers have been on the forefront of game-changing

legislation for survivors of human trafficking and sexual assault, including 1) decriminalization for those who are trafficked and 2) improvements in victim compensation for survivors of trafficking.

Mintz also assisted Centerlink, a member-based coalition of LGBTQ+ centers that serve over 200 centers across the country and the world. The firm advised on Q Chat Space, a digital LGBTQ+ center where teens can chat in professionally-facilitated on line support groups. Mintz drafted contracts and policies for this aspect of the program.

Mintz is working with The Whitman Walker Center, a Washington, D.C.-based healthcare provider to develop a high-level legal training program that covers an overview of bills that have been introduced across the country targeting healthcare providers providing gender affirming care to transgender patients, and the applicability of state medical practice acts and their impact on these providers.

Mintz is a founding member of the Boston Lawyers Group (BLG), which supports the efforts of member organizations in identifying, recruiting, advancing, and retaining attorneys of color. Each member gathers information through the consortium and takes steps independently to achieve greater diversity in its organization. Mintz is not only a founding member of BLG, but one of our partners serves a leadership role on its board. We also provide pro bono legal advice on employment and consulting agreements as well as updating the current bylaws. BLG is currently housed at Mintz's Boston Office given our close relationship and support of the organization's efforts.



"We are honored to receive this award for our pro bono work related to LGBTQ+, gender, and racial equity. Mintz has been committed to inclusivity since our founding, and we're proud to contribute to the collective work of advancing social justice."

— Susan M. Finegan, Member & Chair, Pro Bono Committee





BEACON OF JUSTICE
2023 Awardees



Nixon Peabody is proud to be at the forefront of the fight for gender equity and transgender rights. Whether challenging state laws that restrict the right to fully express one's gender identity, advocating for victims of domestic violence, or simply enabling people to change their names, we support communities that have been historically marginalized by our justice system.

Consistent with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s admonition that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, we strive to foster more holistic equity nationwide, especially for racial minorities who are impacted by gender equity issues. The reforms we have created, and continue to create, help to redress the manifold ways in which systemic discrimination compromises racial and gender equity nationwide.

One area of focus is transgender impact litigation. We are currently challenging laws in Montana and Iowa that threaten the constitutional rights, to say nothing of the personal dignity, of all transgender residents. Both cases have widespread consequences for LGBTQ communities nationwide.

In conjunction with the Iowa ACLU, we sued the state as part of a long-running dispute over a law that allows Medicaid to deny coverage for gender-affirming surgeries. Iowa prohibits public funding for transition-related services, despite covering reconstructive medical procedures for other conditions. Our attorneys reached a pivotal milestone when a trial court struck down the law as a violation of the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause, greenlighting coverage for our two transgender clients. This case is currently before the Iowa Supreme Court, where a ruling on constitutionality would permanently invalidate the law and more broadly vindicate transgender rights.



*Sharmaine Heng,
Director of Pro Bono &
Social Impact*



*Matthew Richards,
Pro Bono Partner*

“Through litigation and advocacy, our firm serves those who are often overlooked by our justice system. We are proud to stand alongside our fellow honorees and partner organizations who are advancing racial and gender equity nationwide.”

— Matthew Richards, Pro Bono Partner

In Montana, we secured a preliminary injunction blocking a state law making gender-affirming surgery a prerequisite for amending birth certificates to align with gender identity. The state has since adopted an outright ban on birth-certificate amendments by transgender people, which our team is working to enjoin. Our partner in this case—the Montana ACLU—reached out to Nixon Peabody specifically because of our longstanding commitment to and experience with transgender impact litigation. Our litigation in Montana will have a multiplier effect and benefit similar efforts across the country.

The injustices facing our transgender clients in Montana and Iowa are unfortunately pervasive. Through our work in Iowa and Montana, we hope to combat systemic discrimination against transgender people across the country. The result will be particularly consequential for racially diverse transgender individuals, who comprise 45% of the US transgender population, many of whom already face other access to justice hurdles.

ROPES & GRAY

Ropes & Gray's pro bono teams are known for their advocacy in groundbreaking civil rights cases focused on LGBTQ+ equality and racial equity.

Recently, Ropes & Gray teams have been helping in pro bono matters where issues of LGBTQ+, gender and racial equality intersect. In 2022, this includes fighting legislation in Florida amidst the recent wave of anti-“woke” and anti-LGBTQ+ state laws. One of these laws, HB 7, or the “Individual Freedom Act” (IFA), bars employers from holding trainings or workshops that promote ideas related to race, sex or national origin. These vaguely-worded prohibitions contain concepts that are central to mainstream diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) trainings, such as cultural competency, privilege, implicit bias, systemic or institutionalized racism and sexism, and potentially even homophobia.

In July 2022, we filed a federal lawsuit alongside Protect Democracy to block enforcement of HB 7 on behalf of Florida-based honeymoon registry company Honeyfund.com and workplace diversity consultancy Collective Concepts and its co-founder Chevara Orrin. We later added the largest minority owned franchise of Ben & Jerry's to the litigation. The firm's clients planned on holding trainings that included topics such as the advancement of women in business, gender expansiveness, institutional racism, unconscious bias, and diversity and inclusion. Chief U.S. District Judge Mark Walker agreed with our team's analysis and granted a temporary injunction in August, finding that our clients are substantially likely to

succeed on the merits of this lawsuit “because, without justification, the IFA attacks ideas, not conduct.” The order is currently on appeal in the 11th Circuit.

On an individual level, we continue to help transgender clients overcome legal obstacles that arise in connection with transition. Years ago, we co-founded Project Validate, an initiative with GLAD and the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition that helps transgender clients in New England update their names and gender markers on government-issued documents. Of GLAD's total intakes for 2022, a quarter of the applicants self-identified as BIPOC. In 2022, we helped almost 200 New England residents update documents like birth certificates, drivers' licenses, social security cards, and passports. Our work helped people of all ages. We have served over 1,250 clients since our project launched, with the help of more than 430 volunteers. In addition, we have participated in the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund's Name Change Project, assisting more than 90 low-income transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary clients.

We have also worked closely with Immigration Equality, a leading provider of immigration assistance to members of the LGBTQ+ and HIV-positive community. Over the past 16 years, we have assisted nearly 150 clients from countries around the globe facing violence, arrest or even death due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status.

“Dedication to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice is a core value of Ropes & Gray. We are so proud of our commitment to identifying and dismantling systemic racism and of the work that we have done as a law firm to effect societal change in this critical area. It is truly humbling to be recognized for these efforts with a 2023 Beacon of Justice Award.”

— Paulita Pike, Partner and Diversity Committee Co-chair

Skadden

Skadden's dedication to pro bono work is a core aspect of our culture. Our founders believed not only in a lawyer's social responsibility, but also that we all benefit when the legal system is accessible to everyone. Those views continue to thrive at Skadden, where we have dedicated nearly 2 million hours to pro bono over the last 10 years alone. For many of our pro bono matters, there is an important intersection of racial equity issues that we work diligently to understand and address. This applies to our LGBTQ+ matters as well. Although we do not always have a precise way to quantify this work, many of our LGBTQ+ matters also intersect and implicate racial equity issues. We are consistently aware that we must be thoughtful about the intersectionality of our clients' identities and the systemic influences on their lived experiences, including interactions with the justice system.

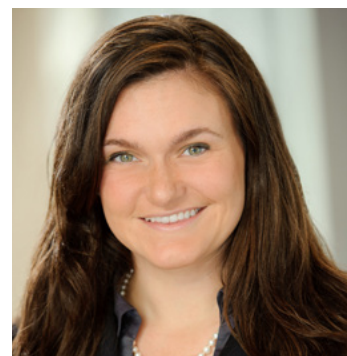
Skadden has long been committed to supporting LGBTQ+ rights through our pro bono work. The firm's attorneys and professional staff handled over 100 matters relating to LGBTQ+ rights in 2022. Skadden maintains a vibrant LGBTQ+ asylum law practice, having assisted nearly 70 LGBTQ+ individuals with their asylum cases in 2022, and continues to make a tremendous commitment to representing LGBTQ+ asylum seekers from countries around the world.

We are intentional about employing advocacy that understands that the immigration system we are navigating is ripe with racial justice challenges.

In addition to several legal matters Skadden has worked on to impact the LGBTQ+ community, the firm also hosted three clinics in 2022 to provide assistance at the intersection of supporting LGBTQ+ rights and immigrant/low-income individuals.

Skadden's Palo Alto and Los Angeles LGBTQ+ Affinity Network held a virtual pro bono legal clinic to assist transgender clients with name change and gender marker processes. The remote clinic was hosted in collaboration with Bet Tzedek, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit providing free legal services to low-income communities. Over 20 attorneys helped clients complete the legal paperwork necessary to apply for legal name and gender marker changes. This clinic was critical in providing transgender clients the opportunity to receive legal services they otherwise wouldn't be able to afford.

Skadden attorneys and professional staff screened LGBTQ+/HIV+ immigrants for asylum eligibility. A team from five Skadden offices participated in a legal clinic to assist low-income LGBTQ+/HIV+ immigrants who have faced persecution in their home countries. Following training, volunteers virtually connected with their clients to determine whether those individuals are eligible to apply for asylum or other immigration relief in the United States. The clinic was held in partnership with Legal Services NYC. These asylum clinics equipped LGBTQ+ clients with protection from severe mistreatment and a renewed hope of safety.



“We are proud of our pro bono work supporting LGBTQ+ rights and addressing gender-based equity issues. We are committed to continuing this critically important work and helping those in need access the legal system.”

— Brenna K. DeVaney, Chief Pro Bono Officer



“Attorneys across the firm have been actively engaged with supporting trans people all across the country. From gender change and immigration assistance to submitting amicus briefs in appeals regarding name change statutes and gender affirming care battles, we have been hard at work supporting the trans community. I am proud to belong here.” — Rafael Langer-Osuna, Partner

SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS

Squire Patton Boggs (SPB) has long been dedicated to providing pro bono representation to clients in matters addressing LGBTQ+, gender and racial equity.

Our past work includes challenging the constitutionality of a discharge from service on behalf of an openly gay member of the US military and representing the National Center for Lesbian Rights in a landmark custody trial, the conclusion of a four-year-long fight between two mothers over their daughter.

Building upon our historic efforts in the LGBTQ+ space, in 2022, we continued to take on cases involving the most pressing LGBTQ+ rights issues of the moment. SPB lawyers filed an amicus brief on behalf of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children and nine other advocacy organizations challenging Texas Governor Greg Abbott's directive that the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services investigate, as child abuse, parents who provide medical and mental healthcare to their transgender children.

SPB attorneys also filed an amicus brief in a 7th Circuit case challenging the constitutionality of Illinois' then-restrictive name change statute. Our attorneys, on behalf of a number of LGBTQ+ bar and civil rights associations, elucidated the serious constitutional implications of this statute

for members of the transgender community, as well as the privacy, and safety implications as their legal name can force a transgender person to disclose deeply private information: that they are transgender. To that end, we also partnered with Equality Ohio to assist LGBTQ+ individuals with legal name and gender change recognition.

We also served as co-counsel for a group of law school professors, Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, rabbis and scholars in filing an amicus brief in the New York appellate court successfully challenging Yeshiva University's denial of recognition of the YU Pride Alliance — a student club for LGBTQ+ students — on religious grounds.

In 2022, we worked on a number of matters where gender and racial equity intersect. Our signature project, which was developed throughout 2022 and recently launched in February 2023 is a legal clinic to provide pro bono legal services to women-of-color owned businesses for New Voices Foundation, a non-profit designed to create an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem for women of color-led startups. We also conducted a legal clinic with NYLAG to file VAWA/Battered Spouse waivers so that low-income, immigrant domestic violence survivors could gain legal status without relying on their abusive US-citizen spouses.

Additionally, SPB served as pro bono outside counsel for 500 Women Scientists, which is working to make science open and inclusive and by fighting racism, patriarchy and oppressive societal norms. We are providing the National Women's Law Center legal advice on variety of topics related to advocating and supporting gender and racial equality, and assisting The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity on corporate governance matters.



BEACON OF JUSTICE
2023 Awardees



SERVES
PRO BONO

Steptoe has a longstanding commitment to pro bono work that advances LGBTQ+ and gender-based equity and racial justice. In 2022, in Steptoe engaged in pro bono work intended to address systematic inequities and advance LGBTQ+ rights in areas including immigration equality, equal access to healthcare and housing and support of non-profits serving the LGBTQ+ community.

In 2022, Steptoe obtained asylum status for a client, who identifies as gender non-binary and gay, and is a dual national of Egypt and Tunisia. Steptoe submitted a brief to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services arguing the client had a well-founded fear of persecution in Egypt and Tunisia based on both countries' targeted harassment, detention, and torture of LGBT people. The client suffered significant psychological trauma and physical abuse by their parents in connection with their sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious beliefs, and is overjoyed to now have a place of refuge in the United States.

Also in 2022, Steptoe filed an amicus brief on behalf of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC) and prominent businesses in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, in *Carpenter v. James*, a case known as the corollary to the case commonly known as *Masterpiece Cakeshop*. The amicus brief addressed the scope of protections against discrimination for

LGBTQ+ patrons seeking goods or services, such as wedding photography services, under New York State human rights laws and federal civil rights laws. Amici argued that adopting broad exemptions to New York's non-discrimination laws would negatively affect their ability to maintain their diverse and inclusive environment, and to ensure the dignified treatment of their employees.

Steptoe has been conducting researching and is planning to represent the Human Rights Commission ("HRC") and an individual client in challenging discrimination against transgender people by a temporary housing provider. The litigation will involve the potential expansion of *Bostock* (protecting gay or transgender employees against discrimination) to the Fair Housing Act ("FHA"), in particular reaching transgender people who face homelessness or are unstably housed. The litigation will seek to expand important protections against discrimination for transgender people in need of temporary emergency shelter.

In 2022, GMLA — Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality partnered with the Tegan and Sara Foundation, a nonprofit started to launch the brand-new LGBTQ+ Healthcare Directory with key support and collaboration from global health service company, Cigna. Steptoe provided support to the Foundation in their work to update and rework the GLMA database for LGBTQ friendly health care providers. Steptoe reviewed their legal disclaimers, terms of service and potential legal questions. The LGBTQ+ Healthcare Directory is now open for provider registration and patient use.

“Steptoe has a longstanding commitment to pro bono work that advances LGBTQ+ and gender-based equity and racial justice. In 2022, Steptoe engaged in pro bono work intended to address systematic inequities and advance LGBTQ+ rights in areas including immigration equality, equal access to healthcare and housing, and support of non-profits serving the LGBTQ+ community.” — Paul Lee, Pro Bono Partner



“WilmerHale is very proud of this award and of our longstanding commitment to advancing gender and racial equity. NLADA’s recognition highlights not only the important work that has been done, but also the tremendous amount of work still to be done — particularly as reproductive rights are under attack across the country in a post-Roe world.”

— Michelle Diamond, Partner



WilmerHale’s pro bono commitment remained unparalleled in 2022. Our lawyers advocated for reproductive rights across the country, bringing challenges to laws that deny women access to constitutionally-protected abortion care, discriminate based on gender, and disproportionately harm women of color as well as low-income, medically-underserved, and vulnerable communities.

Our lawyers also helped gain US asylum for individuals who, for their gender or sexual identities, faced intolerance in the form of discrimination and threats of violence in their home countries.

On October 12, 2022, WilmerHale achieved a major victory on behalf of Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, and other abortion providers when Judge Christian Jenkins of the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas preliminary enjoined Ohio’s six-week abortion ban, which took effect immediately after the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision. The state court held that the Ohio Constitution protects the right to abortion as an exercise of liberty and that the ban discriminates against women in violation of the Ohio Constitution’s Equal Protection clause.

In issuing the preliminary injunction, the court found that the six-week ban would cause devastating harm to women. At a full-day evidentiary hearing — which was scheduled with only three weeks’ notice — WilmerHale lawyers

presented evidence of patients who were harmed by the ban while it was in effect. Health care providers recounted stories of women who were forced to delay their cancer treatment until they could obtain abortions out of state, child victims of rape who were likewise forced to travel out of state to obtain abortion care. Patients who cannot travel are forced to decide between terrible options: carry unwanted pregnancies to term or try and terminate their pregnancy outside of the medical system. The people who are most likely to be unable to travel are often the most vulnerable — they are typically young, low income, victims of domestic violence, people with disabilities, and communities of color that have traditionally been medically underserved.

Our legal fight for reproductive rights continues in Ohio. On March 14, 2023, the Ohio Supreme Court ordered briefing on whether the plaintiff abortion providers and clinics have standing to bring suit on behalf of women in Ohio and whether appellate courts have jurisdiction to consider Judge Jenkin’s grant of the preliminary injunction.

In early 2022, our client, a successful entrepreneur persecuted in Uganda after being outed as gay, was granted asylum in the US. He had kept his sexual orientation secret because LGBTQ+ people face widespread condemnation and violence in Uganda.

After our client’s sexual identity was revealed several years ago, a violent mob gathered outside his business. He immediately went into hiding and, after weeks of living in fear, escaped to the US on a tourist visa. His apartment was ransacked, his partner’s home torched, and the police threatened friends and family members, indeed torturing one for information on his whereabouts.

WILSON SONSINI

Wilson Sonsini has long been committed to advocacy for gender equality and the LGBTQIA+ community as key focus areas of our pro bono platform. Our clients and co-counsel include nonprofits supporting women and the LGBTQIA+ community, and we assist individuals from these communities with asylum, name-change, and anti-trafficking matters, among others.

In recent years, many states have enacted (or attempted to enact) laws seeking to ban transgender girls from playing on girls' sports teams, with deleterious effects on the young girls' mental health. In March 2022, Utah passed H.B. 11, a law barring all transgender girls from kindergarten through high school from competing on girls' sports teams. Shortly thereafter, Wilson Sonsini, alongside the ACLU of Utah and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, brought a lawsuit (Roe v. UHSAA) on behalf of three transgender female students. In August 2022, the Third District Court of Utah issued a preliminary injunction order blocking the enforcement of H.B. 11 and held that plaintiffs had shown a substantial likelihood of success on their claim that this law violates their constitutional rights. The preliminary injunction remains in place while the litigation proceeds.

Wilson Sonsini actively works on dozens of immigration matters, many of which are for people facing discrimination based on their gender or sexual orientation. Teams have recently submitted asylum applications on behalf of multiple brave young women from Afghanistan seeking to obtain a higher education and live freely. The women completed their asylum interviews in 2022. As of March 2023, one of these women was granted asylum, with the remaining applications pending. The firm generally provides immigration representation for women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community all over the world. A large proportion of these individuals are domestic abuse survivors or survivors of systematic discrimination. Recently, the firm obtained immigration relief in the form of asylum and U-Visas on behalf of multiple LGBTQIA+ people and women who left their abusive partners to seek a better life in the United States. Outcomes for our inspirational clients include an asylum grant for a bisexual man from Nigeria who was persecuted for his sexuality, U-Visa grants for multiple women and their family members for their cooperation with police against their abusive partners, an asylum grant for a Guatemalan woman whose husband and his family consistently made threats on her life, and an asylum grant for a woman from Mexico who faced death threats from the cartel her husband had joined. Wilson Sonsini attorneys have also successfully represented numerous courageous survivors in obtaining restraining orders and custody relief in court, including a divorce in New York that was recently resolved after severe delays following the COVID-19 pandemic.



“Intentional inclusivity and commitment to pro bono/community service are cultural bedrocks for our firm. And while we don’t live them for the clout, to be recognized among such a great group and by an awesome organization like NLADA is an inspiration to do even more.”

— Luke Liss, Pro Bono Partner





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BEACON OF JUSTICE
2023 Awardees

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Partner with NLADA in scaling justice in America to 100 percent!

There are many ways for advocates of access to equal justice to support NLADA, including becoming a member, donating pro-bono hours or making a financial contribution in support of our mission.

To make a 100 percent tax-deductible contribution online, click [HERE](#).

You can also:

- Become a valued contributor with our monthly sustainer giving program
- Make a contribution in honor of a colleague, mentor or friend, or as a memorial to a loved one
- Ask your employer about matching your gift
- Make a gift of appreciated stock
- Create a personal fundraiser benefiting NLADA on Facebook
- Look for us during the annual CFC campaign—#10490
- Make a bequest

Companies and law firms can also:

- Join national corporate leaders as a member of our Corporate Advisory Committee
- Activate pro-bono representation
- Inquire about creating a tailored cause marketing program for your company
- Ask about other in-kind support

We look forward to making a difference with you!

For more information on these and other opportunities, please contact:

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Did you know that you can become an NLADA member?



Because the quality of justice in America should not depend on how much money a person has, NLADA leads a broad network of advocates on the frontlines to advance justice and expand opportunity for all by promoting excellence in the delivery of legal services for people who cannot afford counsel.

2023 NLADA Beacon of Justice Awards

