



PLSE SHARES EXPERTISE ON EXPUNGEMENTS AND THE EFFECTS OF CRIMINAL RECORDS HISTORIES WITH NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY LEADERSHIP

JANUARY 3, 2018 (Philadelphia, PA). Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) began 2018 with its Managing Attorney, Zane Johnson, going to Washington, D.C., with Lieutenant Governor Mike Stack and Board of Pardons Secretary Steven R. Burk, to discuss Pennsylvania’s “Pathways to Pardons” program. The summit was called by Richard Baum, Director of National Drug Control Policy, and was also attended by representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and Board of Probation and Parole, and several high-ranking members of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Lieutenant Governor Stack is the architect of “Pathways to Pardons” –the only such programs in the country. [As he wrote when launching the program in 2015](#), “individuals with a history of substance abuse often have a past that is checkered by crimes they committed while suffering from addiction. Once fully committed to recovery, their criminal history, while not representative of the people they are today, continues to thwart their ability to lead fully productive lives by limiting their career opportunities, their ability to get jobs, and even their ability to get housing or financial credit.” For these citizens, expungements and pardons represent a pathway to a better life, for them and for their families.

“PLSE has worked closely with the Lieutenant Governor since the creation of Pathways to Pardons and has been a key partner as we have presented the program to the community,” said Secretary Burk. “Our meeting with federal officials in Washington demonstrated the importance of having at the policy table lawyers who share a passion for justice, expertise in expungement, and demonstrated success in persuading judges to release those once addicted to drugs from the heavy chains of their criminal records histories, so they can pursue their potentials.”

The group discussed the Pathways to Pardons program as a potential nationwide model to help Americans receive a second chance after accumulating a criminal record while battling addiction. A pardon is a forgiveness of crime and the restoration of rights and privileges lost as a result of the conviction, making it possible for a crime to be expunged completely from a person 's criminal record. In Pennsylvania, only the Governor can grant a pardon, and only upon the recommendation of the Board of Pardons.

“We look forward to working with PLSE in the coming year,” Secretary Burk continued, “with the objective of significantly reducing the time it takes to grant a pardon to those who have truly turned their lives around.”

ABOUT PATHWAYS TO PARDONS: Pathways to Pardons brings together representatives from the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons, Department of Corrections, Board of Probation and Parole, and service providers to provide information on the pardon process. The program encourages individuals with past convictions to apply for a pardon to help them achieve a second chance at life. More information about the program can be [found here](#).

ABOUT PLSE: Founded in 2010, PLSE provides free legal representation to lower income residents of Philadelphia whose criminal records are holding them back from achieving their potential as productive, contributing citizens. The services include seeking expungements in criminal court and pardons from the Governor, educating elected and community leaders, and empowering under-resourced communities to seek a greater voice and needed legislative reforms. PLSE was twice recognized in 2017 as an exemplary non-profit, with both a 2018-19 Barra Award, and the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation’s Goffman Award. For more information about PLSE, visit www.plsephilly.org or contact info@plsephilly.org.