



Brandeis Law Society Becomes the First Bar Association in Pennsylvania to Offer Pro Bono Help With Pardons

August 14, 2018. The Louis D. Brandeis Law Society today announced its new partnership with Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity in which it will recruit and support attorneys providing volunteer legal services to poor Philadelphians seeking pardons from the Governor. Brandeis is the first bar association to sign up to help with the new Pardon Project.

It has been estimated that over 200,000 low-income Philadelphians have been convicted of at least one crime. For a great many, the bad decisions occurred when they were young, often under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Today, those convictions are being used by employers, landlords, credit agencies, and others to deny opportunities to people who have turned their lives around and are otherwise clearly qualified for advancement. The stigma of being branded a “criminal” for all time does more than just keep individuals and their families in poverty: because arrests and convictions are disproportionately higher in low-income, minority communities, criminal history records are helping to keep entire neighborhoods in poverty.

The Louis J. Goffman Award-winning **Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE)** files and prosecutes in court more criminal record expungement petitions than any other organization in the country. It is launching its new Pardon Project, to help clients who have clearly turned their lives around since the time they were convicted and have earned forgiveness from society. The **Louis D. Brandeis Law Society** has agreed to find lawyers to help PLSE clients through the daunting pardon application and the 3-year administrative process, collecting the necessary documents and telling their stories of transformation in the most accurate, persuasive ways.

“We are excited to be the inaugural law association partner in this important project,” said Jennifer Coatsworth, Chancellor of the Law Society and an attorney with Margolis Edelman. “What’s key to success in the pardon process is thoroughness, attention to detail, accuracy, and storytelling. These are skills that all of our members share, regardless of practice area. We see pardons as a way that any of us can fulfill our Talmudic tradition of ‘repairing the world’ by helping individuals achieve better lives for themselves and their families.”

Brandeis and PLSE will be offering a 2-credit CLE program on September 17 at 4:30 pm that will be a practical guide for attorneys seeking to help non-incarcerated clients obtain pardons in Pennsylvania. It will free to any lawyer who is considering volunteering for the new Pardon Project. At the conclusion of the program, pro bono lawyers will be assigned an existing, pre-qualified PLSE client to help through the pardon process.

For more information about the Brandeis partnership with PLSE, contact Adam Laver, laver@blankrome.com. For information about the CLE program, contact Tobey Oxholm at oxholm@plsephilly.org.