

Philadelphia Foundation Awards First-Ever Grant to PLSE

January 9, 2019 – The Philadelphia Foundation announced today that it has provided a \$10,000 Leadership Development Grant to Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE). The grant was announced by Pedro A. Ramos, the foundation's President and CEO.

This is the first grant the foundation has awarded to PLSE. It was supported by the William J. McCahan 3rd Fund in Memory of Thomas C. McCahan and Florence M. McCahan. The grant is intended to strengthen organizational capacity and nonprofit leaders in the areas of governance, planning, civic engagement, and board and staff development.

“The timing of the grant could not be better for us,” said Tobey Oxholm, PLSE's Interim Executive Director.

Within the span of the past year, PLSE has appointed a new executive director, hired two new staff, started a student internship program, and greatly expanded and diversified its Board. It also more than doubled its annual budget, raised more than \$100,000 in donations for the first time since its founding in 2010 and attracted first-time support from several well-known foundations in addition to the Philadelphia Foundation.

Over the same one year period, PLSE also instituted a variety of best practices, including independent reviews of its financials and Form 990, and achieved a Gold Seal rating from GuideStar. Perhaps most significantly, it launched its new Pardon Project this past October, which is expected to start connecting PLSE with workforce development, public health, social service and religious institutions in low-income/high-arrest neighborhoods throughout the city that give communications and volunteer management very high priority.

“I want to thank the Philadelphia Foundation for its confidence in PLSE as we push forward on so many fronts to help our neighbors overcome the stigma that comes from past interactions with the criminal justice system,” said M. Zane Johnson, PLSE's Managing Attorney. “If we are to reach our potential as a society, we need to give everyone the chance to reach his or her individual economic and personal potentials. At a minimum, we need to stop branding people forever as a ‘criminal’ based on decisions they made on their worst day, and allow them to find better jobs, housing and credit, and create better lives for themselves and their families. This Philadelphia Foundation grant will really help us develop and leverage our assets to maximum advantage.”

About the Philadelphia Foundation: Founded in 1918, the Philadelphia Foundation strengthens the economic, social and civic vitality of Greater Philadelphia. It grows effective philanthropic investment, connects individuals and institutions across sectors and geography, and advances civic initiatives through partnerships and collaboration. A publicly supported foundation, the Philadelphia Foundation manages more than 900 charitable funds established by its donors and makes over 1,000 grants and scholarship awards each year. To learn more, visit www.philafound.org.

About PLSE: PLSE provides free legal representation to low 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.