



**Contacts:**

Nancy Drane, Executive Director  
DC Access to Justice Commission  
nancy.drane@dcaccesstojustice.org  
202.736.8334

Ritchenya Dodd, Public Relations Manager  
Hogan Lovells  
[Ritchenya.dodd@hoganlovells.com](mailto:Ritchenya.dodd@hoganlovells.com)  
374.271.2037

**See additional contacts below.**

**Legal community launches D.C. Represents to expand pro bono legal representation of local residents impacted by the pandemic**

Washington D.C., 25 March 2021 – A coalition led by the D.C. Access to Justice Commission’s COVID-19 Task Force has launched D.C. Represents to call on the local legal community to expand its pro bono commitment to address COVID-19-related legal needs in the District.

Before the pandemic, one in six D.C. residents lived in poverty, and COVID-19 has exacerbated already extremely difficult economic situations for many. D.C. Represents is mobilizing law firms, individual practices, government attorneys, corporations, associations, law schools, and public interest organizations to increase their commitments to provide pro bono services in partnership with local legal services organizations.

“Health needs are naturally front and center during a public health emergency, but this pandemic and our response to it have led to mushrooming legal needs too,” said D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser. “We know that when people are represented by counsel they are much more likely to succeed. The important work of D.C. Represents will play a tremendous role in our city’s recovery.”

D.C. Represents participating organizations work with legal services providers to provide pro bono representation in legal matters including eviction, domestic violence, debt, children and families, wills and probate, and access to unemployment insurance and public benefits.

“The COVID-19 crisis has worsened a civil justice crisis that our District neighbors faced even before the pandemic,” said Prof. Peter Edelman, Chair of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission. “The commitment of pro bono lawyers to help meet the extraordinary need right here in our community is absolutely essential.”



“When faced with legal issues threatening their stability, the vast majority of D.C. residents—75% to 97%—have appeared in court without a lawyer,” added James J. Sandman, Vice Chair of D.C. Access to Justice. “We aim to change that.”

The D.C. Courts support efforts to expand pro bono representation of litigants. “Even here in our nation’s capital, where we have one of the largest concentrations of lawyers and a judiciary devoted to access to justice, there are people living in our community who do not have the means to afford an attorney, nor access to pro bono assistance,” said D.C. Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby. “After all the damage that COVID has wrought on our economy, those with lower income levels and those who have been left without a job need the support of the legal community now more than ever.”

Added D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring: “Pro bono is so vitally important in our community. The DC Represents campaign recognizes this important contribution to our community, ensuring that otherwise unrepresented litigants have someone standing by them who has legal knowledge, skill, and ability to help ensure their issues are properly presented to the court.”

Access to legal services is both an economic and racial justice issue. Wards 7 and 8, which are predominantly Black, had the highest pre-pandemic poverty rates. Low-income individuals experience higher rates of civil legal problems, and it is extremely difficult for them to recover from the negative effects of losing housing, health insurance, or employment. Yet access to legal services can make a significant difference in legal outcomes and is a critical part of the District’s safety net. In eviction cases, for example, parties with counsel are more likely to raise legitimate defenses and less likely to have a writ of eviction issued against them.

“D.C. Represents is a laudable effort and a good start towards ensuring that the growing number of District residents who cannot afford representation can access legal services from the city’s best firms and lawyers,” Attorney General Karl A. Racine said. “I encourage the coalition and other firms to make tangible commitments, including exceeding their prior year’s total of pro bono hours logged on behalf of D.C. residents, and consider incentivizing partners, associates, paralegals, and other timekeepers to ramp up this work by counting pro bono work toward billable hour requirements.”

D.C. Represents is calling on the local legal community to do more to address the need for legal representation in the District in ways that include:

- Creating signature projects and new initiatives
- Designing D.C. focused pro bono teams
- Increasing individual representation
- Reaching out to the community to discuss their challenges and legal needs

The list of participating organizations committed to D.C. Represents, which continues to grow, currently includes:

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP



Allen & Overy LLP  
Arnold & Porter  
The Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law Pro Bono Program  
Cooley LLP  
Covington & Burling LLP  
Crowell & Moring LLP  
Dechert LLP  
District of Columbia Government  
DLA Piper US LLP  
Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP  
Finnegan  
Fish & Richardson PC  
George Washington University School of Law Legal Clinics  
Gibson Dunn  
Goodwin Procter LLP  
Hogan Lovells US LLP  
Jenner & Block  
King & Spalding  
Mayer Brown LLP  
Miller & Chevalier  
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP  
Morrison & Foerster LLP  
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP  
Perkins Coie LLP  
Steptoe & Johnson LLP  
Squire Patton Boggs  
U.S. Department of Justice Pro Bono Program  
Venable  
White & Case LLP  
Wiley Rein  
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale & Door LLP  
Zuckerman Spaeder LLP

To learn more about D.C. Represents, and to join the effort, visit [here](#).

The following individuals are willing to be interviewed about the project. The individuals listed in each category are working in partnership on a project related to the subject area and could be interviewed together:

### **Housing/Eviction**

Rebecca Troth, Executive Director  
DC Bar Pro Bono Center  
[rtroth@dcbbar.org](mailto:rtroth@dcbbar.org)



202.780.2730

Lise Adams, Director  
Legal Services for Individuals and Families  
D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center  
ladams@dcbar.org  
202.780.2740

Suzanne Takeuchi, Head of Marketing and Communications  
D.C. Bar  
stakeuchi@dcbar.org  
202.737.4700 x2870

Lisa Dewey, Pro Bono Partner  
DLA Piper  
[Elizabeth.dewey@us.dlapiper.com](mailto:Elizabeth.dewey@us.dlapiper.com)  
202.412.1439

### **Children/Families and Housing Conditions**

Jennifer Masi, Pro Bono Director  
Children's Law Center  
[jmasi@childrenslawcenter.org](mailto:jmasi@childrenslawcenter.org)  
571.659.5528

Allyson Boucher, Communications Director  
Children's Law Center  
ABoucher@ChildrensLawCenter.org  
609.364.0370

Katherine Lugo, Senior External Relations Manager  
Children's Law Center  
KLugo@ChildrensLawCenter.org  
305.542.9871

Susie Hoffman, Public Service Partner  
Crowell & Moring  
[shoffman@crowell.com](mailto:shoffman@crowell.com)  
301.793.2579

### **Unemployment and Housing**

Chinh Le, Legal Director  
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia  
cle@legalaiddc.org  
347.489.5835 or 202.386.6662

Rob Pergament, Director of Development



Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

[rpergament@legalaiddc.org](mailto:rpergament@legalaiddc.org)

202.661.5964

Paul Lee, Pro Bono Counsel

Stephoe & Johnson

[plee@stephoe.com](mailto:plee@stephoe.com)

202.316.5344

### **Domestic Violence**

Sara Tennen, Executive Director

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project

[stennen@dcvlp.org](mailto:stennen@dcvlp.org)

480.200.0404

Blair Decker, Senior Pro Bono Attorney

Hogan Lovells

[Blair.decker@hoganlovells.com](mailto:Blair.decker@hoganlovells.com)

202.256.7459