

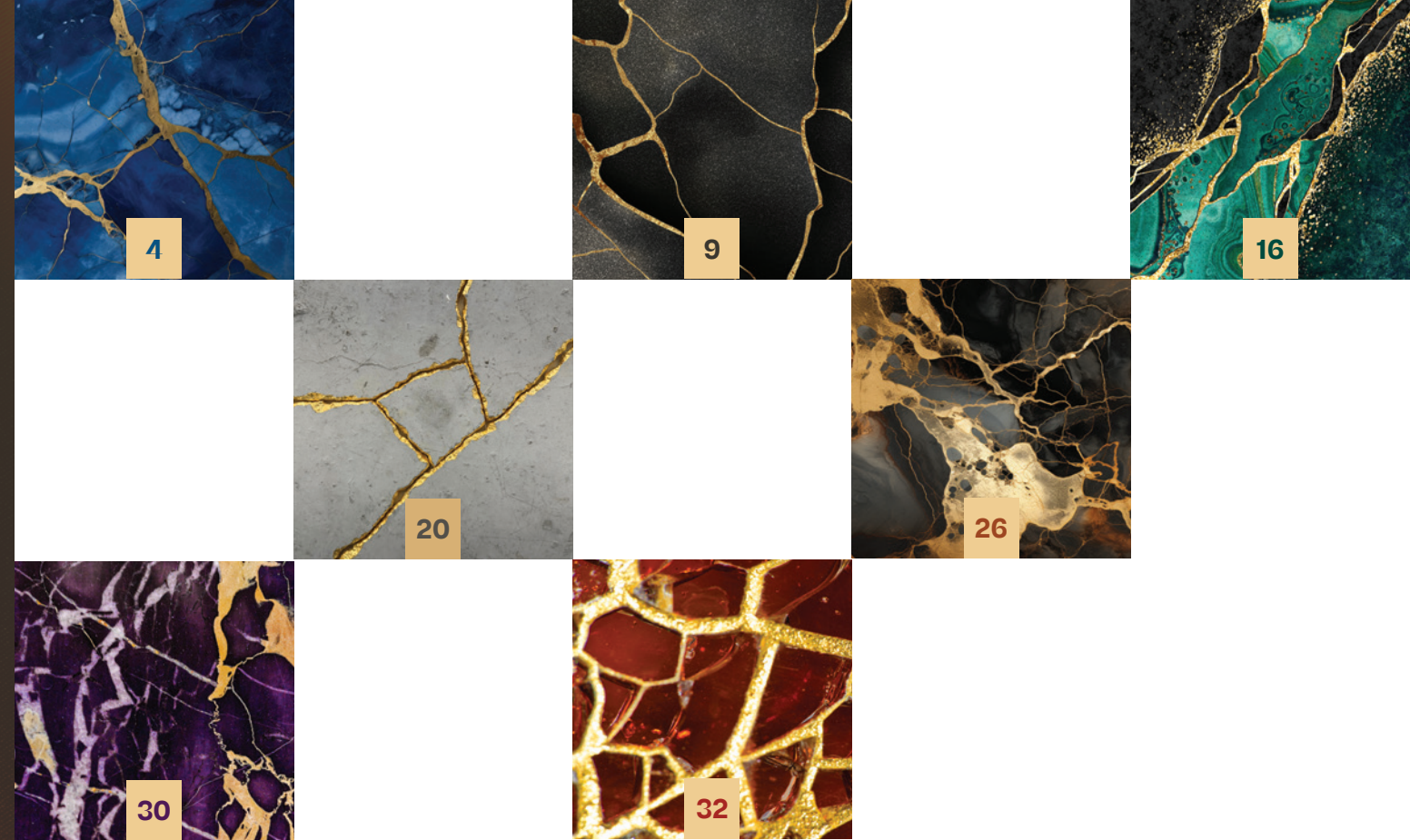


**Lowenstein  
Sandler**

# **PRO BONO REPORT**

**Lowenstein Center  
for the Public Interest**

# 2025



## OUR MISSION

From its founding, Lowenstein Sandler has been committed to advancing the public interest and serving communities in need. The Lowenstein Center for the Public Interest embodies this commitment, directing the firm's strong pro bono program and other forms of civic and philanthropic engagement. Through these efforts, the center addresses significant social problems and offers meaningful assistance to low-income and other marginalized people, along with the organizations that advocate for and support them. This work engages the full range of the firm's talents and reflects the core values that imbue all the firm's efforts: to perform work of the highest quality in a manner that maximizes results for our clients and causes.

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## FILLING IN THE CRACKS

Each year, our Pro Bono Report offers an opportunity to pause and reflect—on the people we have served, the partners who have stood alongside us, and the collective effort required to confront some of the most persistent inequities in our legal system. The stories and data in this report capture the extraordinary commitment of Lowenstein lawyers and professional staff, as well as the resilience of the clients and communities who faced unprecedented challenges in 2025.

This year’s report is inspired by the Japanese art of kintsugi, through which broken pottery is repaired with lacquer mixed with gold, highlighting—not hiding—the cracks. The result is an object that is not only restored but strengthened and made more meaningful by what it has endured.

That philosophy resonates deeply with our pro bono practice. Across every area of our work, we see clients under strain—immigrants navigating years of uncertainty, individuals seeking second chances after decades of incarceration, nonprofits working tirelessly with limited resources and increased demands. These cracks are not abstract. They are lived experiences. And while no single lawyer or organization can repair them alone, meaningful progress happens when we work together.

Our role, alongside our legal services partners and community collaborators, is to help fill those gaps—bringing skill, creativity, and persistence to moments where the law falls short. Whether through direct representation, impact litigation, policy advocacy, or transactional support for mission driven organizations, our pro bono work is about strengthening what exists and restoring fairness where it has fractured.

The pages that follow reflect that collective effort by sharing stories of collaboration, resilience, and

incremental change—of clients who refused to give up, partners who pushed for reform, and volunteers who showed up repeatedly. Among these clients are “Jane,” an incarcerated transgender woman seeking safety while in prison; “Selena,” a trafficking survivor seeking protection from persecution; BrightStreet, a nonprofit organization that works with lower-income entrepreneurs to fuel economic vibrancy in local communities; and Sammy, Christopher, and James, who rebuilt their lives during their decades-long incarceration and secured early release through their journeys of redemption and change. The report also details the many ways our partnerships help serve our clients and communities, such as our collaboration with Legal Services of Northwest New Jersey to educate veterans about the rights and resources available to them and our longstanding clinic with Prudential Financial and Volunteer Lawyers for Justice that has helped more than 500 families navigate landlord-tenant court and secure stable housing.

We are deeply grateful to our clients for trusting us at pivotal moments in their lives, to our partners in the legal services community for their leadership and expertise, and to our colleagues across the firm whose dedication makes this work possible. Like kintsugi, this work is careful, collaborative, and grounded in respect for what already exists. And like kintsugi, it reminds us that repair—when done thoughtfully and together—can create something stronger and more beautiful than before.

**Alexander Shalom**  
Chair,  
Lowenstein Center  
for the Public Interest

**Natalie J. Kraner**  
Legal Director,  
Lowenstein Center  
for the Public Interest

# PRO BONO BY THE NUMBERS

THE FIRM DEDICATED

28,064 hours to pro bono work in 2025

LOWENSTEIN SERVED

776 pro bono clients in 2025

ON AVERAGE, EACH LOWENSTEIN LAWYER SPENT

68 hours on pro bono matters in 2025

THE FIRM HAS DEDICATED

603,847 hours to pro bono work over the past 29 years

# CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

## Collaborating to Protect the Right to Vote

In 2025, the firm once again played a pivotal role in safeguarding voting rights during New Jersey's gubernatorial election through Election Protection, the national, nonpartisan voter hotline organized by **Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**. We updated state-specific materials to ensure volunteers had accurate guidance and operated the New Jersey command center, which served as the hub for real-time problem-solving on Election Day.

As the command center, we addressed systemic voter issues by directly engaging with county and state officials to resolve problems quickly and effectively. Our team worked in close coordination with a coalition of voting rights advocates, including the **ACLU of New Jersey, Disability Rights New Jersey, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and Prison Legal Advocacy Network**. We also collaborated with the Office of the Attorney General to ensure voters could exercise their rights without obstruction.

One of the most significant challenges was a series of unfounded bomb threats at polling places

**Our team worked in close coordination with a coalition of voting rights advocates to ensure voters could exercise their rights without obstruction.**

across the state early in the day. In response, we convened immediately with state officials to assess the situation and confirm with counties that either temporary alternate polling sites were established or that original locations were safe for voters.

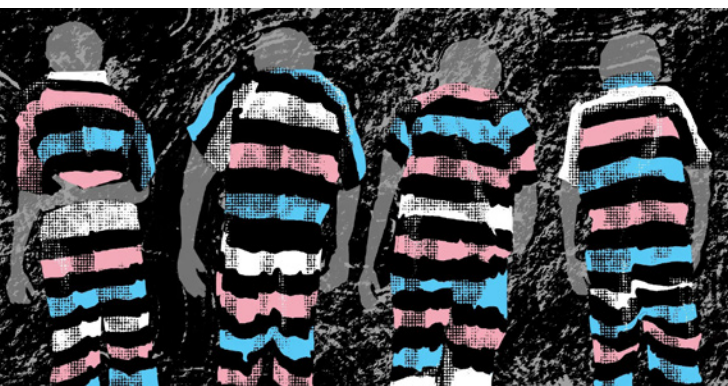
Through these efforts, we reinforced our commitment to protecting democracy and ensuring that every eligible voter in New Jersey had the opportunity to cast a ballot.



Police presence outside a polling place in Ridgewood after a bomb threat was called in. / Photo by Kyle Mazza/Anadolu via Getty Images

## Safeguarding Incarcerated Transgender Individuals

**O**n January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an Executive Order targeting transgender people by, among other things, requiring transgender women in federal prisons to be housed in men’s facilities regardless of their individual safety needs. The Order also directed the BOP to stop all medically necessary treatment for transgender people in federal prisons. These mandates violate the Constitution’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment by prohibiting adequate medical care and by subjecting transgender women to a serious risk of sexual violence in male facilities. They also violate federal law, which requires the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to make housing and medical decisions based on individualized assessments of a person’s medical history and safety risks. Federal law expressly allows transgender women to be housed in women’s facilities when appropriate. By imposing a categorical housing policy solely based on birth sex, the Order attempts to override these legal protections and ignores correctional officers’ considered judgments about individual housing placements, putting transgender women at risk of serious harm.



Working with co-counsel **GLAD Law** and the **National Center for LGBTQ Rights**, we represent several transgender women whom the BOP had previously determined could only be safely housed in women’s facilities. After the Order, each woman faced immediate transfer to a men’s prison and the sudden loss of critical medical care. For example:

- “Jane,” a transgender woman with female anatomy, had lived safely in a minimum security women’s facility for years. Days after the Order, she was abruptly moved to a higher security men’s facility, strip searched, placed in isolation, and told she would lose access to longtime hormone medication. She was subjected to constant surveillance by male guards—even while showering or using the restroom.
- “Maria” had transitioned long before her incarceration and had spent her entire BOP sentence in women’s housing. After the Order, she too was told she would lose her hormone medication and would be transferred to a men’s facility.
- “Carla” and “Donna” had previously survived sexual assaults and harassment in men’s facilities before the BOP placed them in women’s units for their safety. The Order required them to return to facilities the BOP had already deemed unsafe.

In every case, the risk was profound: Without medical care and placed in men’s prisons, these women faced extreme vulnerability to harassment, violence, and sexual assault as well as severe exacerbation of gender dysphoria.

We filed federal lawsuits to block the transfers and ensure continued access to medically necessary treatment, arguing that the Order violates the Administrative Procedure Act, the Equal Protection Clause, and the Eighth Amendment. The cases were heard before the same judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The district court agreed that the threatened transfers would cause severe and likely unconstitutional harm. It ordered the BOP to maintain the women’s existing housing placements and restore their medical care while the litigation proceeds. The government appealed only the housing ruling, which is fully briefed and argued before the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. In the meantime, the district court’s orders protecting these women have remained in place for more than a year.



## Supporting Fairness and Inclusion in School Athletics

**F**or years, our firm has been at the forefront of defending transgender rights. We have challenged discriminatory laws and championed the dignity and inclusion of transgender individuals in schools, workplaces, and communities. This commitment continued in *West Virginia v. BPJ*, a case in which we partnered with a coalition of pediatric endocrinologists and pediatricians to file a [friend-of-the-court brief](#) with the Supreme Court of the United States after the state enacted a law barring transgender girls from participating on girls’ school sports teams. The filing helped ensure that the voices of medical experts and the lived realities of transgender youth were brought to the Court’s attention.

Supporters of the law argued that all transgender girls possess an inherent athletic advantage, justifying blanket exclusion from girls’ sports. Relying on decades of clinical experience and scientific consensus, our brief explained why that claim is inconsistent with medical science. Athletic differences between males and females

develop during puberty, driven largely by increased testosterone levels. Transgender girls, like BPJ, who begin puberty blockers and hormone therapy at the onset of puberty do not experience these elevated levels of testosterone. Their bodies, hormone levels, and athletic capabilities mirror those of their non-transgender peers, meaning they have no inherent athletic advantages over other girls.

The brief argued that there is no scientific justification for excluding transgender girls who have not experienced male puberty. The evidence shows that prepubescent boys and girls perform similarly in sports, and the “male athletic advantage” is a product of puberty, not birth. We await a decision from the Court and are hopeful that young transgender girls in West Virginia can participate in athletics alongside their classmates.

## IMMIGRATION

## Protecting Vulnerable Youth From Deportation

**S**pecial Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) provides a path to permanent protection to children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by one or both parents. When a state court determines that it would be unsafe for a child to reunify with a parent or return to their home country, the child can seek SIJS and, eventually, lawful permanent residency. But because of yearslong visa backlogs, many young people wait in uncertainty until they are able to apply for permanent residency.

To protect these children while they wait, the government adopted the SIJS Deferred Action Policy in 2022. Under the policy, SIJS recipients are automatically considered for deferred action that, if granted, protects them from deportation and allows them to apply for work authorization while they wait for a visa. On April 7, 2025, the government abruptly ended the policy—without notice, explanation, or consideration of the thousands of young people who relied on it—in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Working with the **National Immigration Project, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Public Counsel,** and Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, our firm filed a

**The 2022 SIJS Deferred Action Policy is back in effect. The government must once again make determinations on deferred action and work authorization requests.**

nationwide class action challenging the unlawful termination of the policy, which left thousands at increased risk of deportation and without the ability to legally work while awaiting visas. We represent nine young immigrants and two legal services organizations and seek to reinstate the policy and restore the protections that had safeguarded roughly 200,000 vulnerable youth whose SIJS determinations already recognized that returning them to their home countries would be dangerous.

In November 2025, the court halted the policy's rescission, finding that the government likely acted unlawfully when it terminated the SIJS Deferred Action Policy without considering the harm to young people who had relied on the policy. The judge concluded that without court intervention, these young people would face serious and irreversible harm.

As a result, the 2022 SIJS Deferred Action Policy is back in effect. The government must once again make determinations on deferred action and work authorization requests, and our individual clients are protected from deportation while the case proceeds—restoring crucial stability and safety to children who have already survived profound hardship.

The court did not, however, require the government to fully restore its prior policy and approach for evaluating deferred action requests, which treated a SIJS grant as a “strong positive factor” favoring deferred action. We have appealed that portion of the ruling to ensure that SIJS recipients receive the full protection the law requires.



Counsel and advocates outside of the courthouse after oral argument.

## Expanding Our Capacity to Represent Special Immigrant Juveniles

**B**eyond impact litigation, we expanded our direct representation of children seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)—a form of protection for young people who have suffered parental maltreatment. SIJS offers vulnerable children a path to safety, stability, and, ultimately, permanent legal status in the United States. To qualify, a state court must determine that:

- The child is under 21 and unmarried.
- The child is dependent on the court or placed with a court-appointed caregiver.
- The child cannot reunify with one or both parents due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or a similar reason.
- It is not in the best interest of the child to return to his or her home country.

With this state court order, a child can apply to federal immigration officials for SIJS, which removes key barriers to obtaining a green card. We have helped dozens of children secure SIJS and lawful permanent residency.

**This cohort model strengthens our impact—allowing us to share knowledge and experience, expand capacity, and sustain this vital work for years to come.**

In 2023, we partnered with **Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)** to launch a cohort-based model that allows our lawyers to handle cases more efficiently and collaboratively. By grouping similar cases, placing them on coordinated schedules, and supporting volunteer teams with experienced mentors, we are able to serve more children while maintaining high-quality, individualized representation. Cases from our current cohort include:

- Two sisters from Ecuador who, after the death of their mother, escaped an abusive father and now live safely with their older sister in New Jersey. One dreams of becoming a singer; the other hopes to pursue gymnastics.
- An 18-year-old from Mauritania who endured years of unpaid labor and abuse by an uncle and now lives safely with his brother in New Jersey, allowing him to focus on building a new life.
- Siblings from Guatemala who had been abandoned by their father and now live with their mother in New Jersey. She wants to be a great mother, and he wants to be a police officer.

This cohort model strengthens our impact—allowing us to share our knowledge and experience, expand capacity, and sustain this vital work for years to come.



SIJS cohort volunteers meeting to discuss the status of their cases.



“Selena” / Photo by Bernard DeLierre

## Securing Asylum for a Trafficking Survivor

**S**elena” fled Honduras in 2015 after surviving years of brutal persecution by an MS-13 gang leader. Treated as a “jaina”—a gang leader’s captive girlfriend—she was imprisoned (along with her sister), forced into domestic and sexual servitude, and subjected to severe physical, emotional, and sexual violence. When Selena bravely escaped and asked Honduran police for help, officers instead collaborated with her abuser. MS-13 retaliated by murdering Selena’s cousin and attempting to kill her father, making it clear she had nowhere safe to turn.

Selena and her sister undertook a dangerous journey to the United States, arriving in December

2015 to seek asylum. Government shutdowns and COVID-19 delays stretched her case over nearly a decade, but in 2025, the court finally heard her story. Recognizing the severity of her persecution and the impossibility of returning to Honduras, the court granted Selena asylum. This decision not only affirms Selena’s right to safety but also sets a powerful precedent for survivors of gender-based violence and gang persecution.

But Selena’s fight is not over. The government has appealed the decision, and we continue to defend her right to remain safely in the United States.



Two clients we assisted with visa extensions so they can remain in the U.S. to receive necessary medical care. / Photo by Bernard DeLierre

## Helping Immigrants Receive Lifesaving Care

The firm has long championed immigrant rights through individual representation and impact litigation aimed at systemic change. While we bring deep experience to these efforts, we also embrace opportunities to learn new skills and meet urgent needs identified by community partners.

This year, one such need came from the **New York Legal Assistance Group**: immigrants on tourist visas receiving lifesaving medical care in the United States who required visa extensions to complete treatment. Our volunteers acted quickly—preparing and submitting forms under tight deadlines and collaborating with medical staff and social workers

to ensure continuity of care. We filed extensions for numerous clients, including multiple extensions for patients whose treatment plans evolved over time.

We are proud that our lawyers combine dedication, experience, and adaptability to address a wide spectrum of immigration challenges. Whether safeguarding individuals from persecution, ensuring noncitizens' constitutional rights are protected through impact litigation, or securing visa extensions for patients needing lifesaving medical care, their work ensures safety, stability, and access to essential treatment.

## Equipping Front-Line Organizations During Heightened Enforcement

As federal immigration enforcement escalated, nonprofits serving immigrant communities faced heightened uncertainty—compounded by staffing and funding challenges. In addition to scaling up our direct representation, our lawyers developed practical strategies to help these organizations protect the people they serve.

We created a written advisory for nonprofits explaining how to respond if federal immigration authorities appear on-site. These materials outline when organizations may legally refuse entry, how to interact with law enforcement, and how to establish safe, rights-centered protocols grounded in the Fourth Amendment and applicable federal and state policies.

Demand quickly grew for deeper guidance on creating protected spaces—areas where entry requires a judicial warrant. To meet this need, we delivered live and virtual trainings for nonprofit

leaders, staff, and volunteers. Through webinars alone, we trained thousands. We also launched a dedicated email hotline to connect nonprofits with pro bono counsel for help with policies, data collection practices, and enforcement-response planning.

As we worked with more organizations, it became clear that different sectors faced unique challenges. We expanded our support by developing tailored trainings and materials for schools, arts and cultural organizations, health care providers, religious institutions, food banks, libraries, and others.

This scalable model allowed us to reach broad audiences while giving organizations concrete tools to continue delivering essential, mission-driven services safely.

 Catchafire + Paladin

## Legal Essentials for Nonprofits:

### Navigating Uncertainty and Preparing for What's Next

Welcome! We will get started shortly.

MARCH 2025



One of the webinars firm volunteers led for hundreds of small nonprofits.

# IMPACT INVESTING, MICROBUSINESSES, AND NONPROFITS

## Supporting Mission-Driven Organizations Through Transactional Pro Bono Work

### IMPACT INVESTING

Impact investing uses investment capital to drive social and environmental change—prioritizing mission alongside financial return. Impact investments often support mission-driven organizations operating with limited resources and modest financial margins, distinguishing them from traditional corporate deals and making them especially well suited for pro bono legal support.

In 2025, Lowenstein Sandler’s Investment Management group deepened its pro bono commitment by helping impact-focused clients structure and deploy capital in ways that advance meaningful long-term change.

### DE-CARCERATION FUND

The **De-Carceration Fund** is a venture capital fund dedicated to criminal justice reform. It invests in businesses that create opportunity and restore power to communities long harmed by the criminal legal system. Notably, half of its investment committee is composed of formerly incarcerated individuals, ensuring that lived experience

### DE-CARCERATION FUND

Ethical Disruption of the Criminal Justice System

guides investment decisions. We represented the organization in launching its second investment vehicle, which seeks to raise funds to support innovative companies developing technology-driven solutions to improve fairness and outcomes across the U.S. criminal justice system.

### EMERGING MARKETS INVESTORS ALLIANCE (EMIA)

EMIA is a New York-based nonprofit that helps institutional investors promote good governance and sustainable development in emerging markets. Through collaboration with investors, companies, governments, and policy experts, EMIA works to improve both social outcomes and long-term investment performance.



Emerging Markets Investors Alliance

We assisted EMIA in formalizing its membership structure and drafting key governance policies—foundational work that strengthens the organization’s ability to advance its mission and grow its impact.

The client had this to say about its primary volunteer lawyer:

“Your work has been stellar—efficient, timely, empathic, and thorough. The work coordinates the various skill sets of the firm into a package of documents and advice that enables us to build better member relations, which advances our mission. You listened carefully, and provided re-drafts as needed and quickly in order to keep our project on track toward success.”

## REFUGEE INVESTMENT NETWORK (RIN)

Based in Washington, D.C., **RIN** is the first impact investing and blended finance collaborative dedicated to creating long-term solutions for people displaced by conflict and crisis. RIN connects refugee-led and refugee-serving businesses with capital and works with investors to demonstrate how investment can help address challenges faced by displaced people worldwide. We helped RIN launch its new Anti-Trafficking Investment Network (ATIN). ATIN is the first investment collaborative dedicated to eradicating human trafficking, responding to growing investor demand for innovative financial approaches to combat exploitation worldwide.



## MICROBUSINESSES

### BRIGHTSTREET

**BrightStreet** was launched to help underserved entrepreneurs access the capital and support they need to start and grow sustainable businesses. By providing affordable loans, grants, education, and peer networks, BrightStreet helps small business owners build enterprises that strengthen their families, neighborhoods, and local economies.

We guided BrightStreet through incorporation as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit, securing the charitable status essential for fundraising, partnerships, and long-term sustainability. Our team also drafted robust conflict of interest policies, core governance documents, and tailored loan agreements with strong borrower protections.



This legal foundation enabled BrightStreet to launch its first pilot in Newark, New Jersey, in partnership with Prudential, Newark Alliance, Rising Tide Capital, and Rutgers University, with plans to expand statewide. By closing critical gaps in access

to capital, BrightStreet is helping lower-income entrepreneurs build generational wealth, promote family stability, reduce poverty, and foster vibrant local economies.

### RISING TIDE CAPITAL

Since 2012, the firm has partnered with **Rising Tide Capital** in a long-standing pro bono program that expands access to high-quality legal services for underresourced entrepreneurs. Led by lawyers in the firm's Emerging Companies and Venture Capital (EC/VC) group and supported by lawyers across Lowenstein's corporate practices, the program leverages transactional experience to help small business owners overcome barriers to launching and growing sustainable enterprises.



Over nearly 15 years, Lowenstein lawyers have assisted more than 150 Rising Tide Capital clients across industries ranging from health care and consumer goods to cannabis and online commerce. Multidisciplinary teams provide hands-on support tailored to early-stage businesses, including entity formation, governance, contract drafting, lease negotiation, intellectual property counseling, and compliance guidance.

The program runs twice each year and has become one of the firm's most enduring pro bono initiatives—advancing economic opportunity while giving our lawyers meaningful opportunities to build client-counseling and leadership skills. The Rising Tide Capital partnership reflects Lowenstein's broader commitment to inclusive growth, community stability, and long-term impact.

## NONPROFITS

### DATA PRIVACY COUNSELING

Organizations serving communities affected by heightened surveillance and targeting have sought legal counsel to reassess and strengthen their data privacy practices—ensuring sensitive client information remains protected. Lawyers in our [Data Privacy, Security, Safety & Risk Management](#) group provided pro bono counsel to help nonprofits protect their data, reduce risk, and safeguard the people they serve.

In one engagement, we advised a nonprofit working on civil liberties, immigration, and surveillance reform that was concerned about the potential exposure of sensitive client data. Our team analyzed state recordkeeping obligations and developed practical strategies to minimize retained data while remaining compliant with the law and prioritizing client safety.

We trained nonprofit staff and drafted tailored policies focused on:

- Collecting only essential personal information
- Promptly deleting or anonymizing data that is no longer needed
- Limiting access to sensitive records
- Establishing clear protocols for responding to government or third-party requests

This work empowered organizations to operate more securely and confidently while staying focused on their core missions.



### CRYPTO COUNSELING

Members of [Lowenstein Crypto](#) provided critical guidance to international nonprofits navigating complex banking and payment challenges. In one engagement, we advised a U.S. nonprofit operating in a country experiencing hyperinflation, where traditional banking channels made it difficult to move funds safely and efficiently.

Our team evaluated alternative payment methods using digital wallets, which offered more-favorable exchange rates and greater reliability. We helped the client safeguard its charitable funds and comply with U.S. banking, tax, and anti-corruption laws by drafting a clear agreement with a transfer agent that defined responsibilities for managing fund transfers.

We also advised a pro-democracy nonprofit on legally compliant ways to compensate international employees using digital payment platforms—strategies designed to reduce the risk of government surveillance and retaliation.

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## Expanding Second Chances Through Executive Clemency

Some governors have frequently utilized their clemency powers, but in New Jersey, governors had only provided relief to 105 people over more than a quarter century. When Governor Murphy announced a plan to change that, the firm began working with the **ACLU of New Jersey** to increase its practice of filing clemency petitions on behalf of deserving individuals who had committed serious crimes as young people. Clemency provides an opportunity to demonstrate that young people—even young people convicted of very serious crimes—are capable of redemption and change.

In [last year's Pro Bono Report](#), we highlighted the story of someone we called “Johnny.” On Election Day, Johnny (whose real name is Sammy Moore) thought he was having a virtual follow-up meeting with the Clemency Advisory Board, which advises the Governor. To his surprise, when he turned on the video screen, rather than seeing an advisory board member, he saw Governor Murphy himself. The Governor explained that he was so impressed with Sammy’s maturation and remarkable personal

transformation – he learned to read while in prison and, eventually, graduated from Rutgers University with highest honors. As a result, Governor Murphy explained that he was commuting the remainder of Sammy’s sentence and, days later, in time to celebrate Thanksgiving, Sammy walked out of East Jersey State Prison as a free person for the first time in more than three decades.

Other firm clients also received commuted sentences or pardons:

- One client, who had been incarcerated for more than three decades, impressed the Clemency Advisory Board with evidence of maturation and educational attainment. The Governor advanced both her parole eligibility and reduced her maximum sentence by several years.
- Another client had been the victim of physical and emotional abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking throughout her entire childhood. When she was a teenager, the state child welfare system placed her in the home of a known predator who forced her into sexual slavery in exchange for housing. She killed her trafficker in self-defense and, at 16 years old, was prosecuted and convicted through the adult criminal system. The Governor learned about the circumstances of her conviction and how she had spent her life devoted to helping others in the decades since she was released from prison. He issued her a pardon, allowing her to find peace and closure after a long journey of healing and clearing the stigma and obstacles associated with a homicide conviction.
- A third client had been arrested for a marijuana offense as a teenager. A series of failures by lawyers who represented him meant that the arrest remained on his record despite the seeming availability of expungements to clear criminal records that resulted from one-time misbehavior. After reviewing letters of recommendation from civic leaders including members of law enforcement, the Governor issued him a pardon, allowing him to finally move past his youthful mistake.



Sammy and his mom on the day of his release. / Photo by Bernard DeLierre



James Comer embracing Christopher White upon his release after more than 25 years incarcerated. / Photo by Steve Hockstein /HarvardStudio.com

## Reflecting on the Impact of Resentencing

For decades, young people in New Jersey were sentenced to a mandatory minimum of at least 30 years in prison and often more—without any opportunity for parole—for homicide offenses committed as children. These sentences left no room for growth, rehabilitation, or redemption.

In 2021, the firm helped challenge the constitutionality of that approach in *State v. Comer*, filing a [friend-of-the-court brief](#) and arguing before the New Jersey Supreme Court alongside co-counsel, the **Rutgers Criminal and Youth Justice Clinic**, that a mandatory 30-year parole bar did not account for the factors at play when the defendant is a minor at the time an offense is committed. We urged the Court to recognize what science and experience show: Children are fundamentally different from adults, and many young people mature and transform long before 30 years have passed.

Our brief shared stories of individuals across the country who rebuilt their lives after incarceration—becoming social workers, business owners, teachers, and advocates. We also highlighted five New Jersey cases where people had demonstrated profound growth but remained barred from release.

One of those individuals was Christopher White. Chris was 17 years old when he was convicted for his role in a robbery and murder. By the time we filed the brief, he had spent nearly 30 years in prison and had shown remarkable change—taking responsibility for his actions, mentoring others, and living with purpose. He served as a clerk in the prison infirmary, facilitated a mentoring program, earned his associate degree from Raritan Valley Community College, and was pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice studies.

In *State v. Comer*, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the state's mandatory 30-year parole bar was unconstitutional because "it does not conform to contemporary standards of decency." The Court

held that people sentenced to long prison terms as children are entitled to petition for release after serving 20 years, recognizing their capacity for growth and rehabilitation.

Chris was one of the first beneficiaries of a "*Comer* resentencing." He had been out of custody for nearly two years when James Comer, the individual who brought the constitutional challenge that led to the

landmark ruling, was finally released from prison. Chris greeted James at the prison gates; embracing each other, Chris told James that he was free because of his groundbreaking case.

Recently, Alexander Shalom spoke with Chris to ask about his role in the *Comer* decision, his life after release, and his meeting with James.

### LIFE AFTER RELEASE

**Q: What have you been doing since you were released?**

In my first months home, I traveled with my girlfriend to lots of places I'd never been before. My favorite place was the Bahamas—the country is beautiful and the water is amazing. After that, I got a job at a hospital in material management, the department that handles supplies throughout the building. It's a great job, with great people; it provides steady work and benefits.

**Q: What did it mean to you to be able to tell your story to help urge the Court to provide people in your position an opportunity for release?**

It gave me the opportunity to show them that I am a changed individual. I am not the same person who committed a crime 32 years ago. I don't have the same mindset; my decision-making skills have improved. It allowed me the opportunity to show them who I really am.

**Q: What did it mean to you to get to greet Mr. Comer upon his release?**

It meant a whole lot to have an individual who spearheaded the whole legal fight. It was my duty to say thank you to that brother, because he started a movement like no other through his pursuit of justice.

**Q: The case you were involved in helped dozens of people in New Jersey who had been serving very long sentences for actions that occurred when they were children. Are there other similar cases you hope to see in the future? What's next?**

I've actually been able to testify as a witness in a *Comer* hearing. I appeared before the same judge who had released me a few months earlier to testify on behalf of another person who was sentenced for a crime he committed as a child. I was able to show the judge that I had a state job and was now out here advocating for other people. I want to build on that by continuing the mentoring work I started at Northern State Prison. Mentorship would have made a huge difference in my life; I want to help the next generation.

Through this work, our firm has helped open the door to second chances for dozens of people in New Jersey—affirming that accountability and redemption can coexist, and that meaningful change should be recognized.

## Strengthening Criminal Adjudication Through Friend-of-the-Court Advocacy

A fair criminal justice system depends on reliable evidence and decisions grounded in sound procedure. When appellate courts consider issues that directly affect fairness and accuracy, our lawyers frequently participate as amici curiae—“friends of the court”—to provide information that helps courts reach just outcomes. Below are examples of our recent work.

### CHALLENGING THE UNCHECKED USE OF FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

In *State v. Tybear Miles*, the New Jersey Supreme Court is examining how much information defendants are entitled to when their cases rely on facial recognition technology (FRT): Does the defendant get to know how the technology works and the steps that police used in inputting information into the software? We submitted an amicus brief for Dr. Gary Wells, a leading expert

on eyewitness reliability, explaining the risks of misidentification and wrongful conviction associated with both FRT and human inputs that feed the technology. We urged the Court to require robust discovery into the algorithm and the methods police used. A decision is pending.

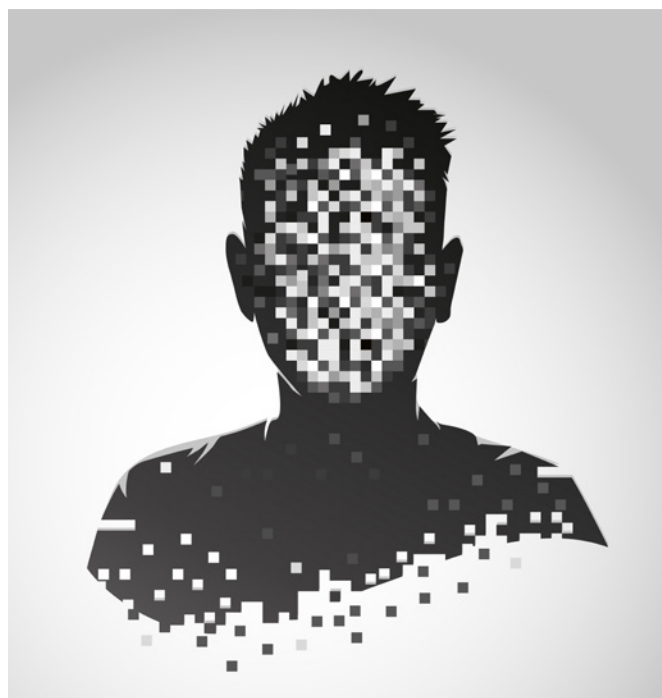
### ENSURING ACCESS TO CRITICAL EXPERT TESTIMONY

In *State v. Fenimore*, the firm represented the **Center for Integrity in Forensic Sciences**, the **Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice at Cardozo Law**, and the **Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law** in a case asking whether experts can ever testify remotely. Although all parties agreed that live testimony is ideal, in some cases where courts are considering the reliability of a particular type of evidence, criminal defendants have an exceptionally difficult time securing a live witness. In some forensic fields, there are very few qualified experts and even fewer who do not have conflicts, or economic incentives, that preclude them from testifying for defendants. The amicus brief argued that courts must consider whether in-person experts are realistically available before denying remote testimony. After argument, the Court dismissed the case due to a plea agreement but referred the issue to a committee to consider rulemaking—an important step toward systemic reform.

### CORRECTING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FORENSIC EVIDENCE

In collaboration with the **ACLU of New Jersey**, in *State v. Lee*, we represented four experts in decision-making and judgment in legal contexts. The case involves whether jurors should be questioned about their preconceived views on

fingerprint evidence. Our brief detailed how the public often misunderstands the reliability of forensic methods and explained how juror misconceptions can taint verdicts. We urged the Court to adopt practices—such as voir dire, clear jury instructions, and careful admissibility decisions—to mitigate these biases. A decision is pending.



# ACCESS TO JUSTICE

## Business Service Group Pro Bono Contributions

Pro bono opportunities are not limited to firm lawyers. Our talented and dedicated administrative staff also use their skills to provide meaningful services to individuals in need of support. In 2025, members of the Business Services Group (BSG) demonstrated that commitment through two impactful projects that expanded access to justice and supported clients during critical moments.

- **Prescreening Clients Seeking Final Restraining Orders**

Working alongside **Partners**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing legal assistance to domestic and sexual violence survivors, BSG volunteers helped prescreen clients seeking final restraining orders against their abusers. This work ensures that survivors of domestic violence receive timely and thorough assistance. BSG volunteers' efforts streamlined the intake process, allowing lawyers at Partners to focus on legal representation while ensuring

that clients felt supported from the very first interaction.

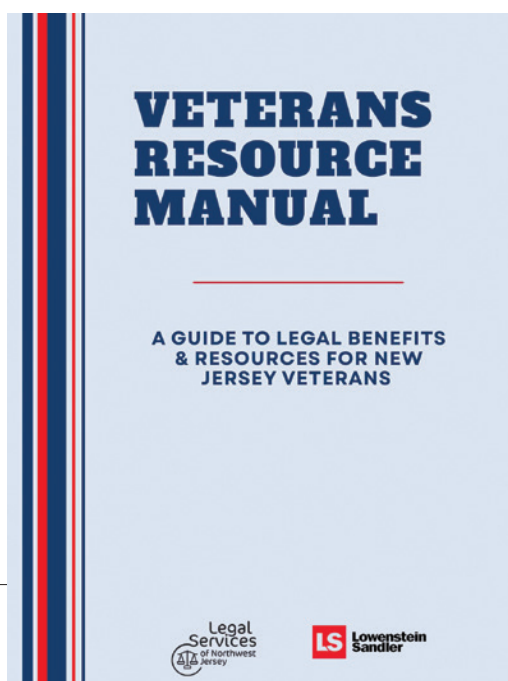
- **Assisting Clients Preparing for Chapter 7 Filings**

BSG staff also partnered with **Volunteer Lawyers for Justice** to assist clients seeking a fresh financial start through Chapter 7 bankruptcy filings. Volunteers worked directly with clients to gather and organize the documentation required for filing, a task that can often feel overwhelming for individuals facing financial hardship. By guiding clients through this process, BSG team members helped reduce stress and remove barriers, enabling clients to take meaningful steps toward stability and independence.



Some of the firm's BSG prescreening volunteers.

## Providing Critical Legal Information for Veterans and Their Families



**L**egal Services of Northwest New Jersey (**LSNWNJ**), in partnership with **Community Hope**, launched the Veterans Justice Initiative to deliver comprehensive legal support to veterans—including help with disability benefits, criminal record expungements, and driver's license restoration. As the program grew, LSNWNJ identified a pressing need: a single, accessible resource outlining the full range of legal protections and benefits available under state and federal law.

Our firm responded to that need by creating a Veterans Resource Manual. This comprehensive guide covers essential topics including:

- Disability compensation benefits for veterans, spouses, dependents, and parents
- Funeral and burial benefits
- Expungements and other considerations for justice-involved veterans
- New Jersey driver's license restoration
- Consumer protections and credit repair
- Bankruptcy under Chapters 7 and Chapter 13
- Public entitlements

- Taxation and family law matters
- Housing preferences, eviction protection, and reasonable accommodations
- Foreclosure protections

This resource will help veterans and their families navigate complex legal frameworks, access critical benefits, and secure the support they need to thrive.

## Providing Life-Planning Support to Low-Income Seniors

In 2025, the firm deepened its commitment to access to justice through ongoing collaboration with **Northeast New Jersey Legal Services (NNJLS)** to host Make-a-Will clinics for low-income seniors. These events enabled community members to secure wills, powers of attorney, and advance health care directives in familiar, accessible settings such as municipal buildings and senior centers.

Throughout the year, volunteers conducted intake interviews and prepared documents tailored to each client's wishes. Nearly 40 individuals referred by NNJLS have already received comprehensive life planning packages, with more underway. Clients consistently express relief and peace of mind knowing their wishes are documented and their families will have clear guidance. As one client shared:

*"This was a deeply personal and important undertaking, and your compassion, clarity, and attention to detail made the experience both reassuring and empowering. Because of your work, I now have a sense of peace knowing these matters have been addressed thoroughly and thoughtfully."*

Beyond NNJLS, the firm partners with organizations nationwide—including **City Bar Justice Center, Howard University, Veterans Advocacy Project, and Volunteer Lawyers for Justice**—to deliver similar services to low-income individuals. By building a network of trained, experienced lawyers, we've expanded our reach and ensured that more people can safeguard their futures and access the same legal protections available to those with greater financial resources.



A client with her lawyer at her will signing ceremony. / Photo by Bernard DeLierre

## By the Numbers

19,824 pro bono hours representing  
**637 clients**  
in "signature projects," including:

6,515 hours representing  
**198 Nonprofits**  
in a variety of corporate and tax matters

1,398 hours representing  
**69 Low-Income Individuals**  
in preparing wills, health care proxies, powers of attorney, and other life-planning documents

633 hours representing  
**90 Housing-Insecure Individuals**  
trying to obtain stable housing

5,393 hours representing  
**72 Immigrants**  
seeking lawful status, release from unlawful detention, or extended stays to receive medical care

1,330 hours representing  
**34 Individuals With Criminal Convictions**  
seeking to prove their innocence, appeal their convictions, petition for sentence modifications or pardons, or expunge criminal records

424 hours representing  
**13 Low-Income Debtors**  
filing for personal bankruptcy to get a fresh financial start

3,173 hours representing  
**122 Low-Income Entrepreneurs and Inventors**  
seeking assistance to start or grow their businesses or file for patents

686 hours representing  
**7 Domestic Violence Survivors**  
seeking final restraining orders and/or child custody and support orders

272 hours representing  
**24 Transgender Individuals**  
seeking legal name changes to better match their identities

## HOUSING



## Standing Up for Housing Stability

In *Fairkings Partners, LLC v. Essence L. Daniels*, the New Jersey Appellate Division issued a published decision affirming tenants' rights under a recent law known as the Stack Amendment. The law allows tenants evicted for nonpayment of rent to regain possession by paying the rental debt within three business days of a lockout. The landlord argued tenants must also pay rent accrued after judgment.

We filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of **Seton Hall University School of Law's Center for Social Justice, Housing Justice Project**, supporting the tenant. Our brief explained that the amount the tenant must pay to avoid eviction or

regain possession is the amount of rent the court determined was due when it entered a judgment. The Court agreed with our interpretation of the Stack Amendment, explaining that: "Requiring tenants to pay more than the amount set forth in the [judgment] would create uncertainty and could impose unreasonable financial burdens on residential tenants. The tenant only has three business days to make the payment. Accordingly, the tenant needs to know the exact amount of the payment."

The decision ensures that New Jersey's remedial eviction statutes are construed liberally in favor of the tenant, promoting judicial clarity and fairness.

## A Decade of Tenant Representation and Systemic Reform

Ten years ago, we joined forces with Prudential Financial and **Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ)** to launch a monthly pro bono clinic for tenants facing eviction in Essex County, New Jersey. The clinic was designed to meet tenants at the most critical moment—after they receive an eviction complaint but before their court date—providing free legal advice that helps them prepare a defense or resolve their case.

The need was overwhelming:

- Essex County courts saw over 40,000 eviction filings each year, with 200–300 cases listed on a typical court day.
- Tenants received their summonses only 10–20 days before hearings, giving them little time to prepare or seek help.
- 98% of tenants were (and still are) unrepresented, while most landlords have lawyers.
- Nearly half of tenants defaulted, losing their homes without ever appearing in court.

High eviction rates pushed families into shelters, into overcrowded or unsafe housing, or out of the state entirely. The clinic—approved by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 2015 and launched in 2016—was created to help combat this crisis.

VLJ manages the clinic by conducting intakes, preparing client files and detailed memos for volunteers, supervising the clinic, and ensuring tenants receive meaningful support beyond the clinic. Lowenstein and Prudential lawyers have volunteered for the clinic every month since its inception, with a cadre of repeat volunteers that have developed deep expertise in landlord-tenant law.

**Pairing direct representation with systemic advocacy protects tenants, strengthens due process, and promotes housing stability.**

Since its inception, we have provided legal services to more than 500 low-income tenants. Data shows more than two-thirds of clinic tenants either win the right to remain in their homes or secure additional time and funds to relocate.

The clinic has evolved over the last decade, moving from a court-based to a virtual clinic; however, the

passion of the volunteers has been steadfast, and the convenors of the clinic have continued to think creatively about how to stem the eviction and housing affordability crisis they are witnessing in their local communities.

In 2020, clinic volunteers and other stakeholders helped form a statewide coalition of housing advocates to prevent mass eviction during the pandemic. The coalition continues to meet regularly and has driven significant policy change. Its work contributed to the drafting and passage of a [2021 law](#) protecting low-, moderate-, and middle-income households from eviction and negative credit reporting for pandemic-related rental debt. Coalition members also served on a court-appointed committee where they advocated for and succeeded in obtaining major reforms to court rules, such as requiring landlords to provide leases and proof of registration when filing an eviction complaint.

The coalition has also promoted due process in eviction courts. A [statewide study of eviction complaints](#) revealed widespread noncompliance with state laws and court rules, leading to unjust eviction judgments. In response, coalition members collaborated with the judiciary and stakeholders to implement reforms, including a new, legally compliant standardized eviction complaint. The coalition routinely comments on and spearheads legislation or changes to court rules or landlord-tenant reforms/procedures on behalf of low-income tenants.

Together, these efforts reflect more than a decade of sustained commitment, pairing direct representation with systemic advocacy to protect tenants, strengthen due process, and promote housing stability. As we look to the years ahead, we remain dedicated to partnering with our community, our pro bono collaborators, and our clients to build a fairer, more just court process for all.

That commitment is perhaps best reflected in the words of one client, who shared the following about their experience:

*“I am writing to recognize the outstanding work of your team during a very stressful and difficult time for me. From the outset, my interactions gave me confidence that I was in exactly the right place.*

*From my initial conversation, I was met with calm, patience, and reassurance. That first interaction helped steady me and made it possible for me to clearly explain my situation and move forward.*

*The volunteer lawyers I worked with were knowledgeable, thoughtful, and genuinely supportive. They listened carefully, validated my concerns, made important corrections where needed, and guided me with clarity and care. The final letter they prepared was something I felt confident and proud to send to my landlord regarding a challenging lease issue.*

*Throughout the process, I felt respected and supported. I am very grateful for the professionalism and compassion shown by this team.*



In-person tenancy clinic in 2016 and virtual clinic in 2026.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# PRO BONO COMMITTEE

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## LOWENSTEIN WORKS WITH MANY PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTES TO A WIDE ARRAY OF NONPROFITS, INCLUDING:

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| ACLU of New Jersey                              | The Gault Center  | Mi Casa Resource Center                            | Refugee Investment Network                        |
| Advocates for Trans Equality                    | GLAD Law  | National Center for LGBTQ Rights                   | Rising Tide Capital                               |
| American Friends Service Committee              | Her Justice   | National Immigration Project                       | Rutgers Child Advocacy Clinic                     |
| Brennan Center for Social Justice               | Howard University   | National Legal Aid & Defender Association          | Rutgers Criminal and Youth Justice Clinic         |
| BrightStreet                                    | Human Rights First  | New Jersey Community Development Corporation       | Rutgers University Advocacy in Action             |
| Bronx Defenders                                 | Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)                                    | New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children       | Seton Hall Center for Social Justice              |
| California Lawyers for the Arts                 | Law Firm Antiracism Alliance                                      | New Jersey Institute for Social Justice            | Start Small Think Big                             |
| CASA for Children of Essex County               | Law Foundation of Silicon Valley                                  | New York Civil Liberties Union                     | TrustLaw  |
| Catholic Charities                              | Lawyers Alliance for New York                                     | New York Legal Assistance Group                    | Veterans Advocacy Project                         |
| Center for Integrity in Forensic Sciences       | Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area | New York Lawyers for the Public Interest           | Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts                    |
| Children's Law Center                           | Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law                     | Northeast New Jersey Legal Services                | Volunteer Lawyers for Justice                     |
| City Bar Justice Center                         | Lawyers for Good Government                                       | Northern New Jersey Sanctuary Coalition            | Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS)                |
| Community Health Law Project                    | League of Women Voters of New Jersey                              | OneJustice   | Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law |
| Community Hope                                  | Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia                     | Partners   | YWCA of Union County                              |
| Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice | Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County                             | Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice at Cardozo Law |   |
| D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center                        | Legal Counsel for the Elderly                                     | Prison Legal Advocacy Network                      |   |
| De-Carceration Fund                             | Legal Services of New Jersey                                      | Pro Bono Institute                                 |   |
| Disability Rights New Jersey                    | Legal Services of Northwest New Jersey                            | Pro Bono Partnership                               |   |
| Education Law Center                            | Legal Services NYC  | Public Counsel                                     |   |
| Emerging Markets Investors Alliance             | Make the Road New Jersey  |  |   |
| Essex-Newark Legal Services                     |   |  |   |
| Fair Share Housing Center                       |   |  |   |

Lowenstein accepts requests for individual pro bono assistance through referrals from approved legal services organizations. Individuals in need of pro bono legal help should contact their local legal services organization or bar association, or visit [www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org).

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