



New York Legal Aid Providers Receive \$279,000 to Improve Pro Bono Services

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WASHINGTON— The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) announced today that it is awarding Pro Bono Innovation Fund grants of \$204,917 to Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. (LawNY) and \$75,000 to Nassau Suffolk Law Services Committee, Inc. (NSLS). LawNY and NSLS are two of 21 legal aid organizations receiving a grant. In total, LSC is awarding \$5.4 million to support efforts to expand and improve pro bono legal services for low-income Americans.

Nationally, half of eligible low-income Americans who seek legal aid are turned away because legal services programs lack sufficient resources. Pro bono services are a vital resource that legal aid organizations funded by LSC draw upon to increase their reach, establishing a vital network of volunteers who can help address the unmet needs of people experiencing issues like eviction, job loss, divorce, debt collection, denial of benefits, scams or natural disasters.

“Civil legal problems have serious consequences and accessing a lawyer has a huge impact on the outcome of a person’s case,” said LSC President Ron Flagg. “The organizations LSC funds work hard to effectively leverage pro bono services to expand the availability of legal assistance and LSC is glad to support their efforts with these grants.”

LawNY’s \$204,917 grant will support the expansion of its reentry program into rural counties in upstate New York. The program assists individuals with criminal records in obtaining record sealing, certificates of rehabilitation and other legal services to improve their employment prospects. LawNY will collaborate with community organizations, recruit and train volunteers and provide holistic legal assistance to clients. LawNY will adapt and expand its existing reentry pro bono project, adding

two paralegals to increase outreach, community collaborations and casework capacity.

NSLS will utilize its \$75,000 grant to modernize and enhance its pro bono program to better serve the legal needs of low-income residents in Nassau and Suffolk counties. With recent leadership changes, increased funding for eviction defense and a shift in volunteer preferences towards limited representation opportunities, NSLS recognizes the need to reassess and redesign its pro bono efforts. NSLS aims to create a high-impact, community-based pro bono program that integrates with its staff efforts, provides training and support to volunteers and expands services to a wider range of legal areas. NSLS will engage a consultant with experience working with poverty populations and non-profit organizations on Long Island to assist in obtaining, reviewing and analyzing information to guide the planning process.

Since the [PBIF grant program](#) began in 2014, LSC has awarded 161 grants totaling more than \$46 million. The funding for these awards comes from LSC's FY 2024 congressional appropriation. Each organization's grant effort seeks to address critical, unmet civil legal needs by creating solutions to persistent challenges in pro bono delivery systems or exploring new methods of pro bono service implementation. The funds are directed to grantee efforts that are replicable and scalable so that innovative practices at successful programs can have an impact across the country.

Rep. Joe Morelle (NY-25) congratulated LawNY on receiving the grant for pro bono services.

"Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. (LawNY) is an important resource for so many people here in Rochester and across our region, and they are well-deserving of this award from the Legal Services Corporation" said Rep. Morelle. "Reentry programs are giving men and women returning home from incarceration the ability to build better futures for themselves and their loved ones, and this funding for LawNY will help expand this opportunity to the widest corners of our community. I look forward to working with LawNY and all our community partners to continue providing hope and opportunity for all."

[Legal Services Corporation \(LSC\)](#) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974. For 50 years, LSC has provided financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. The Corporation currently provides funding to 130 independent nonprofit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.