

# Thank You

By JAMES T. SHEARIN AND  
JENN SHUKLA

**T**hank you for the hundreds of employees of the legal service providers in the state who have dedicated their professional lives to helping out those in need of legal representation but who cannot afford it. We are fortunate in this state to have such a committed group of organizations who have made it their goal to ensure access to justice for all. Those organizations include the following (and we apologize for those we missed):

Center for Children's Advocacy  
Center for Family Justice  
Children's Law Center  
Connecticut Bar Foundation  
Connecticut Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence  
Connecticut Community Law Center  
Connecticut Fair Housing Center  
Connecticut Institute for Refugees  
and Immigrants  
Connecticut Legal Rights Project  
Connecticut Legal Services  
Connecticut Veterans Legal Center  
CTLawHelp.org  
Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA)  
Integrated Refugee and  
Immigrant Services  
Lawyers for Children America  
New Haven Legal Assistance  
Association  
Open Communities Alliance  
Pro Bono Network  
Pro Bono Partnership  
Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut  
Victim Rights Center of CT



Together, they represent thousands of individuals each year whose legal needs would not otherwise be met.

Thank you to the Judicial Branch for its dedication to access to justice. In addition to its Equal Access to Justice Commission, the Branch runs two pro bono programs—the Probate Court's Volunteer Services Program and the Superior Court's Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program.

Thank you to the legal departments of Connecticut's corporations. We are fortunate to have so many businesses who have an ingrained culture of sharing their legal talent with those less fortunate. Many of them are members of the Corporate Pro Bono Challenge®. The Challenge recognizes the "critical importance of pro bono services as a cornerstone of our professional identity...."

Thank you to our state's three law schools whose faculty and students assist scores

of people through their clinic and legal assistance programs.

Thank you to our local and affinity bar associations who likewise support the delivery of pro bono services to individuals within their regions and the constituencies they represent. Often unheralded, they give back.

Thank you to the Connecticut Bar Association and the various programs it has developed to provide for pro bono service opportunities for the Bar, as follows:

## CT Free Legal Answers

Since the program started in 2016, 1,574 Connecticut residents with low or no income have gotten a civil legal question answered on the CT Free Legal Answers website, and hundreds more have been directed to helpful resources. Additionally, 68 volunteer attorneys have provided pro bono services through CT Free Legal Answers.

## Free Legal Advice Clinics

In the 2022-23 bar year, the CBA hosted four quarterly legal advice clinics. During those clinics, about 200 individuals got to meet with a member of our 53 volunteer attorney team for 30 minutes.

## Lawyers in Libraries

Lawyers in Libraries recently opened its tenth location in the state, Berlin, with several more locations, including Hartford, expected to open in the next few months. This bar year, 51 attorneys volunteered at Lawyers in Libraries events. The program hosted approximately 70 events that provided opportunities for Connecticut residents to get needed legal assistance at a location convenient for them during the year.

## Pro Bono Connect

Pro Bono Connect involves a significant commitment to pro bono services with attorneys pledging to take on at least one full direct representation case. In 2022-23, 14 new volunteers joined the Pro Bono

Connect program, bringing the total number of volunteers since the program started in 2020 to 81.

## Bankruptcy Pro Bono

In 2021, the Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section of the Bar created a pro bono program. This past year, 32 experienced bankruptcy attorneys have volunteered to provide pro bono representation to indigent clients in Chapter 7 Bankruptcy proceedings. So far, 11 clients have fully worked through the screening and application process and received pro bono counsel through the program.

## Emeritus Pro Bono and Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program

Through the Emeritus Pro Bono Program, 23 retired or semi-retired attorneys have worked with the bar to create a customized pro bono opportunity that fits their talent and time. Several of those attorneys work with the Small Claims Volunteer At-

torney Program, a partnership between the CBA and Judicial Branch. In 2022-23, the Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program held a total of about 30 events at three locations. At each event, volunteer attorneys met with members of the public with pending small claims matters to provide guidance and advice.

And, finally, thank you to each of you who have helped an indigent client or counseled a nonprofit organization dedicated to public good. We are an honorable profession, and nowhere is that more obvious than in the work we do for those whose legal needs would otherwise go unaddressed but for our service. ■

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*James T. Shearin is the president-elect of the Connecticut Bar Association. He is a trial attorney at Pullman & Comley LLC with wide ranging experience in federal and state courts at both the trial and appellate levels, and before arbitration and mediation panels. Jenn Shukla is the director of access to justice initiatives at the Connecticut Bar Association.*

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### CBA Free Legal Advice Clinic: Volunteers Needed

Tuesday, April 23, 2024  
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024  
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.



If you have 30 minutes free, you can volunteer. Volunteer attorneys will answer legal questions in their area of practice during a 30-minute remote session with a client.

Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

- Fraudulent Business/Debt Collection
- Employee Rights/Unemployment
- Immigration Law
- Landlord/Tenant
- Family Law
- Tax Law
- Bankruptcy
- Pardons
- Wills and Estates
- Torts

Volunteer opportunities are available for paralegals and law students as well. Visit [ctbar.org/FreeLegalAdviceClinics](http://ctbar.org/FreeLegalAdviceClinics) to learn more and register.

