



NYSBA News Release

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Contact: Lise Bang-Jensen

Director, Media Services

lbang-jensen@nysba.org

518-487-5530

ONLINE PORTAL WILL CONNECT VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS SEEKING TO PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO IMMIGRANTS IN NEW YORK

Responding to the urgent need for lawyers to assist New York immigrants in need of representation, the New York State Bar Association and The New York Bar Foundation today announced an initiative to connect pro bono lawyers with nonprofit groups serving immigrants across New York.

"When facing enforcement action, immigrants do not have a right to counsel. Yet immigrants who are represented by attorneys are 14 times more likely to successfully challenge removal than those without attorneys," noted State Bar Association President Claire P. Gutekunst. "The legal community stands ready to help protect the rights of immigrants in our communities."

Since January, thousands of attorneys across the country have volunteered to assist immigrants after the federal government initiated heightened enforcement efforts. Many other attorneys would like to assist, but are not aware of which organizations could make best use of their skills.

The State Bar Association is creating an online portal to connect attorneys with pro bono opportunities statewide on a timely basis and in a way that best matches the skills and interests of each attorney with the needs of organizations providing legal services to immigrants. The portal will also provide access to valuable training materials and other resources.

The New York Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the Association, is providing a grant of \$40,000 toward creating the portal and hiring a pro bono fellow to help administer the statewide portal. The State Bar Association will provide an additional \$40,000 to fund the pro bono initiative.

"The Foundation recognizes the vital and immediate need to provide legal assistance for immigrants facing enforcement proceedings," said Bar Foundation President John H. Gross. "We are pleased to partner with the State Bar Association on this initiative, which epitomizes the Foundation's mission to support charitable and educational projects that help meet the law-related needs of the public and the legal profession."

As part of this initiative and its participation in Governor Andrew Cuomo's Liberty Defense Project, the State Bar Association will continue to offer continuing legal education (CLE) programs for attorneys seeking to represent immigrants in civil detention, administrative and removal proceedings.

On April 12, the Association will co-sponsor a CLE on emergency preparedness for immigrant families, including setting up custodial or guardianship for children of detained or deported parents. The CLE, free for members and \$25 for nonmembers, will be webcast. (Link: www.nysba.org/emergencypreparedness2017).

The online portal is being developed by Legal.io, a legal technology firm that built the new portal for the Association's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (Link: <https://nysbalris.legal.io/>).

The pro bono immigration portal will go live later this spring. In the meantime, attorneys seeking to assist immigrants in New York can contact the State Bar's Pro Bono Services Department at probono@nysba.org or 518-487-5641.

Individuals can make a gift to The Foundation's Pro Bono Access to Justice Fund to financially support efforts to assist immigrants and others in need of legal services. Donations may be sent to The Foundation at 1 Elk Street, Albany NY or made online at <http://www.tnybf.org/>.

The 72,000-member New York State Bar Association is the largest voluntary state bar association in the nation. It was founded in 1876. The New York Bar Foundation is the charitable arm of the State Bar Association.