

**D.C. CONSORTIUM OF
LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS**

January 29, 2014

Clerk, District of Columbia Court of Appeals
430 E Street, N.W., Suite 209
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: COMMENTS ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COURT OF APPEALS RULE 48

Dear Chief Judge Washington:

On behalf of the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers, we write to thank the court for entertaining revisions to Rule 48 governing how law students may practice law in the District of Columbia and to submit these comments pursuant to the court's notice of October 31, 2013.

The D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers is a coalition of 30 member organizations, the vast majority of which provide direct legal services to low-income District of Columbia residents. The Consortium's mission is to coordinate the delivery, expand the availability, and improve the quality of legal services and advocacy for poor and disadvantaged individuals, families, and communities in the District of Columbia. A list of our current members is attached to this letter.

We believe law school clinics are important providers of free legal services to people living in poverty and to community-based non-profit organizations, including some of our member organizations. We appreciate the five years of careful deliberation by the clinical directors who worked on the pending proposal. We believe their suggested revisions to Rule 48 would appropriately authorize an expansion of their practice and support the court's adoption of the proposed amendments.

The amendments proposed by law school clinical directors, however, focus exclusively on students' practice in traditional law school clinical programs. They do not consider potentially broader changes in law students' or recent law graduates' ability to practice that would further expand access to justice. We understand that law school clinical programs and legal services organizations, including many of our member organizations, have different missions. Yet both share a common goal of expanding access to high quality legal services for people living in poverty and for community-based non-profit organizations.

Law students and recent law school graduates can and should contribute significantly to the delivery of free legal services to those who cannot afford to pay. The proposed revisions are a positive step forward, but we believe that a further expansion of Rule 48 could significantly increase opportunities for students and recent graduates to help close the justice gap and to integrate public service into their legal careers.

The D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers expects to work closely with its partners, the D.C. Access to Justice Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Committee, and possibly others, to develop additional amendments to Rule 48 to present to the court in the future. The amendments will be patterned on practice rules in other states that authorize law students and recent law graduates to provide legal services to indigent persons under the supervision of a licensed attorney. In the meantime, we urge that the court adopt the changes proposed by the law school clinical directors.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully yours,

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CONSORTIUM
OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS

By its Co-Chairs:



Chinh Q. Le
Legal Director
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia



Tina S. Nelson
Managing Attorney
Legal Counsel for the Elderly

Enclosure

ATTACHMENT

As of January 2014, the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers is comprised of the following member organizations:

The American Civil Liberties Union of the Nation's Capital
Advocates for Justice and Education
The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Ayuda, Inc.
Bread for the City
Capital Area Immigrants Rights (CAIR) Coalition
Catholic Charities Legal Network of the Archdiocese of Washington
Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)
Columbus Community Legal Services
The Children's Law Center
DC Crime Victims Resource Center
DC Law Students in Court
The District of Columbia Bar Pro Bono Program
The DC Volunteer Lawyers' Project
Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DV LEAP)
The Employment Justice Center
The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
Legal Counsel for the Elderly
Mil Mujeres
Neighborhood Legal Services Program
Network for Victim Recovery - DC
Our Place, DC
The Public Defender Service of DC
The Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities
University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law
University Legal Services
Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts
The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
Whitman-Walker Health Legal Services Program