

## **Who is PIPBA?**

PIPBA is an association of pro bono professionals overseeing pro bono programs at nonprofit and public interest law organizations in the New York City metropolitan area. The association was formed to coordinate and pursue strategies that incorporate pro bono resources from law firms and corporations to complement and expand our respective organizations' capacity to serve the public interest. While our organizations' programs and missions vary, we are committed to supporting a range of pro bono legal services that promote civil rights, human rights and access to justice, strengthen the nonprofit sector, and otherwise improve life for low-income and disadvantaged communities and populations. Our goal is to foster a supportive community where resources are shared, best practices are established, and standards are set to ensure the highest quality pro bono legal services.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Pledge**

PIPBA recognizes that the communities we serve are also the communities being hardest hit by COVID-19. We acknowledge that public interest and pro bono legal work must always incorporate principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to best serve our clients, and we additionally believe that this unique historical moment demands even more. We accordingly pledge to do the following, and invite others to join us:

### **For the Legal Community**

- Call attention to the preexisting institutional, structural, and systemic inequities within our society that resulted in the disproportionate impact on communities of color and immigrant communities during COVID-19 and the resulting economic crisis.
- Recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified existing stereotypes, racist ideology, and dehumanization of Black people, indigenous populations, people of color, immigrants, and many others who are experiencing poverty.
- Recommit to identifying and serving those with the greatest needs as a result of this crisis, including by ensuring that COVID-19-focused pro bono initiatives direct personnel and other resources to responding to the needs of communities of color and immigrant communities.

- Understand that a return to the status quo is not an acceptable option, and use this crisis as an opportunity to bring about systemic change.

#### **For our Practices**

- Strive to include diversity through race, culture, ethnicity, thought, and lived experience in our hiring, promotion practices, and workplace policies while acknowledging that historically underrepresented and underserved communities remain underrepresented and underserved, among both the clients and practitioners in the field.
- Understand that equity and equality are not equal. Equity leads to equality. Equality refers to sameness, while equity means fairness. Use best practices to ensure that practitioners and those who are served are given the representation, tools, and resources to level the playing field.
- Enhance trainings, best practices, and disaster relief planning to include an understanding of the underlying causes of inequity and outcome disparities within our society.
- Ensure that diverse voices, collaborative thought, and inclusive decision-making practices are operationalized in our work.
- Take intentional steps to incorporate principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of our organizations, and, in particular, in the delivery of COVID-19-related legal services.
- Implement a process for, and commit to, evaluating our progress in meeting the goals set forth in this pledge.
- Holding our organization leaders and those in positions of power within our organizations accountable, and encouraging them to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion by:
  - Creating an infrastructure that fosters a workplace built upon trust and belonging.
  - Recruiting staff reflective of the communities served and promote their inclusion and advancement within the legal aid communities.

- Providing tools, resources, support, and trainings to further diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organizations.
- Hiring or designating a staff diversity officer or committee.
- Build partnerships with community groups to help build pipelines for diversity and inclusion.
- Conduct annual evaluations on our organization’s progress towards meeting these goals.

**For our Clients**

- Recognize that many New Yorkers are not able to access vital legal services during these challenging times, and work to address solutions including the technology gap.
- Continue to be flexible to the changings needs of our clients and lead with empathy and understanding.
- Recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has not displaced – and in fact has complicated pre-existing legal problems, and work to provide holistic responses to both existing and emerging needs.