

Debevoise has had an unwavering commitment to our pro bono clients since our firm was founded in 1931. Across all practice groups, we provide pro bono legal services to help close the justice gap and create a more equitable society.

Our pro bono work has three main goals: to provide legal representation to people who could not otherwise afford it, to strengthen the communities in which we live and work, and to protect civil liberties and public rights in the United States and around the world.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with our clients in these efforts and to make a difference together.

For the past seven years, Debevoise lawyers in the United States have averaged more than 100 hours of pro bono work per year.

Our Work

Our pro bono work fights injustice; increases the capacity and impact of organizations working with marginalized communities; and levels the playing field for low-income individuals in legal proceedings.

Providing Legal Representation to Underserved Individuals and Families

Debevoise lawyers represent low-income individuals in criminal, housing, immigration, education and family law matters. We also work with low-income entrepreneurs in incorporating and operating their businesses.

Strengthening Community Organizations

As pro bono lawyers and advisors, board members and volunteers, Debevoise lawyers support the efforts of not-for-profit organizations in our communities. We work with a wide range of organizations — from grassroots efforts focused on individual neighborhoods to legal services organizations, public defenders, and organizations with nationwide and global mandates.

Fighting for Civil Rights and Public Justice

Working with civil rights leaders, legal services providers, and not-for-profit organizations, we tackle matters that address fundamental issues of injustice with the goal of making broad legal and policy changes.

The Holloway Project

Since 2016, Debevoise lawyers have worked to reduce excessive prison sentences that were required by harsh federal sentencing guidelines which Congress has since corrected. This effort, known as The Holloway Project and led by former federal prosecutor and former US District Judge John Gleeson, has already resulted in reduced sentences for more than 30 clients, erased more than 1100 years of their prison sentences, and won the release of 26 of those clients. [See a video](#) about this important effort featuring two of our clients.

Recognition and Awards

The National Legal Aid & Defender Association gave Debevoise a **2021 Beacon of Justice Award** for The Holloway Project, the firm's initiative to fight for criminal justice reform and against racial inequality. The Holloway Project has been **profiled** in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Kids In Need Of Defense **honored** a team of Debevoise lawyers in November 2020 for their "fierce advocacy" on behalf of a family forcibly separated at the U.S. southern border under the "zero tolerance" policy.

Manhattan Legal Services **recognized** Debevoise and Citizens Financial Group in October 2020 for our joint work representing clients applying to naturalize as U.S. citizens.

The Center for Justice and Accountability gave Debevoise its **Partner in Justice Award** in March 2020 for our representation with CJA of four survivors of the horrific Lutheran Church Massacre in Liberia.

The Legal Aid Society honored Debevoise with the **Honorable Jonathan Lippman New York Pro Bono Publico and Public Service Law Firm Award** in 2019. The LAS presents this award annually to the law firm most committed to "making equal justice for all not just an ideal, but truly a reality in New York."

Select Representations

- Won a unanimous victory in the Supreme Court (along with the Center for Constitutional Rights and CLEAR Project), allowing a group of Muslim men improperly put or kept on the No Fly List to sue government officials for monetary damages under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.
- Represented The Weeksville Heritage Center, an educational and cultural center in Brooklyn that preserves the history of one of the largest free Black communities in pre-Civil War America, in its admission to the New York City Cultural Institutions Group.
- Obtained life-changing compensation for a class of Black and Hispanic sheet metal workers who sued their union for racial discrimination.
- As co-counsel with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, negotiated a settlement in a landmark lawsuit by a transgender government employee in Oregon who was unlawfully denied medically necessary care.
- Won a court order voiding policy directives that curtailed the rights of asylum seekers and led to improper removal orders of asylum seekers, as co-counsel with RAICES, Democracy Forward, and CLINIC.
- Advised the Brooklyn Historical Society in its combination with the Brooklyn Public Library, creating the Center for Brooklyn History at the Brooklyn Public Library.
- Assisted the Community Development Venture Capital Alliance in submitting a comment clarifying the treatment of investment funds under the Community Reinvestment Act, which ultimately helped change the rule to encourage more community development investment.

Partnering with Clients on Pro Bono Work

Debevoise invites our clients' lawyers and legal teams to partner with us on pro bono matters.

- **Legal Clinics:** With training and support from legal services organizations, lawyers from Debevoise and our clients assist low-income individuals with a range of limited-scope legal issues. Legal clinics are currently operating remotely.
- **Individual Representations:** We represent low-income New Yorkers and not-for-profit organizations on a range of legal issues and invite lawyers and legal staff at clients to work with us on matters of mutual interest, including housing, immigration, name change petitions, veteran discharge upgrades, and other issues.

To learn more or discuss a potential pro bono engagement, please contact partner John Gleeson or Pro Bono Counsel Jennifer Cowan, or your Debevoise lawyer.



John Gleeson

Partner

+1 212 909 7281

jgleeson@debevoise.com



Jennifer R. Cowan

Pro Bono Counsel

+1 212 909 7445

jrcowan@debevoise.com