MAX BAER   Phone: (412) 467-2220
CHIEF JUSTICE

May 4, 2021

Dear Counselor:

I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well as we all continue to weather the challenges of the past year.

As I assume the role of Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, I am honored to continue Chief Justice Tom Saylor's annual custom of writing to thank you for the financial support you provide to legal aid organizations as a component of our annual attorney registration fee, and to encourage each of Pennsylvania's more than 75,000 attorneys to provide pro bono service through direct representation and additional financial support of the Commonwealth's legal aid programs.

This year, the need is especially acute. The global pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income groups, and the resulting financial and familial stressors are exacerbating the need for civil legal aid among those who cannot afford private counsel. The Supreme Court supports civil legal aid programs in a variety of ways, including creating a continuing legal education pilot program to increase support for those programs, enacting rule changes to facilitate the provision of pro bono services by retired lawyers, funding a loan forgiveness program, and celebrating the work of pro bono volunteers. The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network works in conjunction with a range of regional and specialty legal aid providers, and these structures offer myriad opportunities for volunteer lawyers to donate their time and legal skills as well as their financial support.

I join with Pennsylvania Bar President Kathleen Wilkinson in asking you to commit to the goal of Rule 6.1 of the Rules of Professional Conduct, which calls upon lawyers to render public interest legal service. To those of you who already do so much to support this important work, thank you.

Sincerely,

Max Baer