

## McCarter Pro Bono Team Gives Sex Traffic Victim A Fresh Start

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**Related People:**

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Lawyers working pro bono from McCarter & English LLP and Volunteer Lawyers for Justice helped a woman forced into prostitution get her New Jersey criminal record wiped clean, a success they hope will inspire other sex trafficking victims to fight to clear their criminal records and avoid employment roadblocks.

The vacatur order, the first under a New Jersey statute signed into law two years ago, is an important step toward steady employment for a woman still rebuilding her life after years of abuse at the hands of a violent pimp, said Jessica Kitson, a managing attorney for Volunteer Lawyers for Justice.

McCarter partner Geoffrey Rosamond, a member of the pro bono team, said the firm had a previous relationship with Volunteer Lawyers for Justice but had not previously been involved in work for a sex trafficking victim.

McCarter & English's pro bono practice, which includes work from about three-quarters of the firm's approximately 400 lawyers, volunteered 19,141 hours last year, according to the firm. More than 16,500 of those hours went to help clients of limited means.

The continuing criminalization of trafficked women "is a real problem not just in New Jersey but throughout the country," he said. "When you can make the kind of difference like I think we did here, that really means a lot to us."

In addition to vacating 15 convictions and other records, the judge in a July 13 order also directed the court to remit to the woman more than \$8300, constituting all the fines and penalties she incurred through the arrests.

The petitioner's pro bono team is in the process of getting the court order to relevant law enforcement agencies, a critical part of ensuring future background checks do not reveal old arrests.

"When a conviction is vacated like this, it really goes to the fundamental merits of the conviction and the case itself and just removes that entirely," Rosamond said.