

McCarter Creates Pro Bono Fellowship to Benefit Newark Residents; Tenant Evictions First Area of Focus

Related People:

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Full-Time Fellow Will Represent Underserved Newark Residents On Critical Legal Issues

NEWARK – Citing its longstanding ties and deep commitment to Newark, McCarter & English has established a pro bono fellowship to assist Newark residents with their legal issues.

The law firm, which established its headquarters in Newark in 1865 and has the largest of its nine offices there, is seeking applicants for the fellowship, which will be a fulltime, one-year renewable position. The deadline for applications is Aug. 31.

The McCarter & English Pro Bono Fellowship for the City of Newark is scheduled to commence in the early fall and will focus initially on representing tenants facing eviction. The fellow will expand McCarter's pro bono services to low-income tenants and collaborate with community service organizations, the mayor's office and universities – among others – to educate tenants about their rights and influence public opinion by speaking and writing on the societal and legal aspects of eviction. The fellow may also engage in other forms of policy advocacy.

"We will start out concentrating on the unmet legal needs of tenants, but we're going to be flexible. If it becomes clear in the future that the city's residents need our support in another area, the fellowship program will adapt accordingly," said Michelle Pallak, the firm's pro bono director.

Robert Mintz, managing partner of the firm's Newark office, said: "The firm's partners have always believed that McCarter's unique relationship with Newark warranted a unique commitment to the city's residents. This newly created position will allow our attorneys and staff to continue to make meaningful contributions that improve the lives of Newark residents by helping to avoid the disruption that evictions bring to families.

"We believe that this is one of the only pro bono positions in the country that has a geographical focus. Rather than limiting ourselves to a particular area of law, we wanted to more broadly serve the legal needs of the residents of Newark," Mintz said.

Noting the staggering number of tenants facing eviction without legal representation, Pallak said: "We believe that our focus on the rights of tenants can make a real difference for Newark families. Landlords file tens of thousands of eviction proceedings against tenants in Newark and surrounding communities every

year. Only a tiny fraction of those tenants have legal representation, and we intend to change that.

“We are looking for a lawyer who is passionate about serving low-income Newark residents and who is ready to use a variety of advocacy tools to advance their housing-related rights and needs,” Pallak said. Ideally, candidates will have four years’ experience, including two litigating in Housing Court, and will be fluent in Spanish and/or other languages commonly spoken in Newark.

Mintz said McCarter’s deep roots in Newark made the fellowship a logical extension of its already vibrant pro bono practice.

“In our conversations with Mayor [Ras] Baraka and his team, we all agreed that everyone would benefit if we could step up our service to the city,” Mintz said. “We were looking for an issue where we could make a real difference in the lives of families in the city. The mayor asked if the firm would be willing to take on this issue and we jumped at the opportunity. While we are certainly not anti-landlord – we represent a number of commercial landlords – we do want to support Newark and its residents.”

Mayor Baraka said: “McCarter & English has been an important partner in our work to build a stronger, more equitable city. We are very grateful that the firm is teaming with us to protect the rights of some of Newark’s most at-risk residents, tenants waging unequal battles against landlords unjustly seeking evictions. These residents desperately need the seasoned talented and compassionate representation that McCarter & English will provide. I thank McCarter & English for creating this fellowship involving significant social justice issues affecting Newark and thank them for supporting our city and its residents in so many ways over the years.”

McCarter’s Executive Committee, which unanimously approved creation of the new fellowship program, has set a starting salary that is competitive for public interest lawyers, plus benefits. The fellow will report to Pallak, an experienced social justice lawyer, and Mintz, a white collar criminal defense lawyer.

Pointing to the firm’s expungement, anti-trafficking, civil rights, and immigration pro bono work, Mintz added: “We will continue to do all the other pro bono work that we have been doing, and we’ll continue to engage in community service and charitable giving. But just as our connection to Newark is unique among law firms, this fellowship is uniquely Newark.”