

McCarter & English Hosts Philadelphia VIP Small Business Legal Clinic for Micro-Entrepreneurs

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Philip D. Amoa

VIP's Small Business Legal Clinic for Micro-Entrepreneurs

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Women's Business Development Center, Entrepreneur Works Again Team with Law Firm in Pro Bono Support of Local Emerging Ventures

The Philadelphia office of McCarter & English hosted a small business legal clinic at which small business owners and entrepreneurs with pressing legal needs but limited resources and legal access received *pro bono* legal consultation. The event was part of the LawWorks project run by Philadelphia VIP, one of the city's top providers of *pro bono* civil legal services.

The event, which was co-sponsored by Entrepreneur Works and the Women's Business Development Center, provided the entrepreneurs with professional and legal advice as they seek to navigate such legal issues as business structure, contracts, tax, intellectual property, real estate, employment, and risk management.

McCarter focuses a significant portion of its *pro bono* efforts in Philadelphia on bringing together volunteer attorneys from its own ranks and companies across the city to work with local entrepreneurs who need business law assistance but cannot afford it. The firm multiplies its *pro bono* efforts by partnering with other law firms and with organizations like Entrepreneur Works and the Women's Business Development Center, which aims to foster the development and retention of successful business by delivering resources that enable individuals to start new businesses and strengthen existing ones.

"Equal access to the law – for every individual and every business – is crucial to the success of our society and our communities," said Philadelphia-based McCarter corporate attorney Philip Amoa, who spearheaded the event. "Yet there remains a crisis of unmet legal needs in Philadelphia, most acute among those who have the least."

A member of the Board of Directors of Philadelphia VIP, Amoa added, "The support we received from all the attorney volunteers who were willing to spend time providing free legal advice to local businesses begins to address that imbalance and gets local businesses off the ground by making these crucial legal services

available. When entrepreneurs and business owners have access to the legal advice they need to get started, we unlock real opportunity.” In his commercial practice, Amoa represents companies in mergers and acquisitions, start-ups and investors that fund them.

In all, there were approximately 50 attorney volunteers, including 25 from McCarter, as well as in-house counsel from other local companies. The volunteer attorneys were paired with the entrepreneurs for one-on-one meetings to discuss immediate and ongoing legal matters ranging from choice of entity, contracts, and tax matters, to intellectual property, real estate, and employment issues.

Business ventures of the entrepreneurs at the event included a start-up women’s clothing company, a childcare service, a salon and spa, a travel agency, and a wellness and nutrition company.