



Public Counsel is a nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to advancing civil rights and racial and economic justice, as well as to amplifying the power of our clients through comprehensive legal advocacy. Founded on and strengthened by a pro bono legal service model, our staff and volunteers seek justice through direct legal services, promote healthy and resilient communities through education and outreach, and support community-led efforts to transform unjust systems through litigation and policy advocacy in and beyond Los Angeles.

OPPORTUNITY UNDER LAW PROJECT

Opportunity Under Law (OUL) was formed in 2014 to expand Public Counsel’s longstanding economic justice and impact litigation practice. OUL combats economic and racial injustice in all its forms through community-based, strategic campaigns combining impact litigation, organizing, and communications. These campaigns affect large groups of people within California and nationwide to address structural inequities and discrimination on the basis of race, wealth, disability, gender, and immigration status. Current areas of focus include education equity, children’s rights, combatting homelessness, immigrants’ rights, criminalization of poverty, and low-wage workers’ rights. OUL works with student interns to match areas of interest with our active litigation. Some of OUL’s recent litigation is described below followed by examples of student activities related to each focus area:

HOUSING RIGHTS

Powers v. McDonough is an ongoing lawsuit challenging the federal government’s failure to provide housing and healthcare to Los Angeles veterans with disabilities. As a direct result of the government’s inaction, nearly 3,500 veterans are homeless in Los Angeles in any given night. The lawsuit seeks to (1) require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to fulfill its commitments to provide appropriate Permanent Supportive Housing to disabled veterans and (2) prohibit the VA from entering or continuing unlawful land use agreements.

What do student interns do in housing rights?

Students who work on OUL’s housing rights litigation have conducted legal research, written briefs, assisted with discovery review, exhibit preparation for depositions and trial testimony, attended federal trial dates, and more. During the previous summer, summer clerks observed in-person depositions and reviewed transcripts to create testimony outlines that were critical for trial preparation in *Powers*.

CHILD WELFARE

Ocean S. v. LA County is a lawsuit filed in August 2023 against the State of California and LA County on behalf of young people in foster care. The suit challenges the governments’ systemic failure to provide safe, stable housing and necessary support services for transition age foster youth currently in the foster care system, including by ensuring that all young people in foster care have legally compliant case and transition planning tailored to meet their individual needs.

What do student interns do in child welfare?

Students who work on child welfare cases have written briefs, researched and identified expert witnesses, written team memos on the impact of trauma on foster youth outcomes, researched disability law, monitored settlements for compliance, and more. Previous summer clerks had the opportunity to draft portions of an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case *Brackeen v. Haaland*, highlighting the importance of preserving the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which protects the rights of Native American youth in foster care. Other notable assignments include working with organizational partners to draft letters of guidance to courts and Judicial Counsel to ensure proper application of new law during probate court proceedings.

EDUCATION EQUITY

Mae M. v. Komrosky is an ongoing lawsuit challenging the Temecula Valley Unified School District's censorship of concepts that conflict with their ideological viewpoints, including the history of the LGBTQ rights movement and the existence of systemic racism. The suit, filed in August 2023, is a first-of-its-kind case that seeks to invalidate the Board's curriculum censorship and affirm students' right to comprehensive, fact-based education in California's public schools.

What do student interns do in education equity?

Students who work on education equity have written briefings, drafted expert declarations, organized and hosted plaintiff meetings, researched anti-“CRT” policies throughout the country, followed policy and local politics news, reviewed compliance with education settlements, submitted and reviewed FOIA requests, and participated in oral argument moot court, and more. Previous summer clerks conducted extensive fact research and drafted expert declarations for a preliminary injunction in *Cayla J. v. State of California*, a case challenging the disproportionate learning loss among low-income students of color. Other notable assignments include legal research and drafting a successful appellate brief in the *IntegrateNYC v. State of New York*, a case challenging New York City's two-tiered public school system that disproportionately screens out low-income students of color and seeks to establish a state right to an antiracist education.