

Good morning, and welcome to NYU School of Law.

NYU is honored to host today's hearing on IOLA and the Future of Civil Legal Services in New York State. The topic is of tremendous importance to the people of New York State—both to those who rely on such services to secure the basic necessities of life, and to all of us to envision a more just and democratic society.

First, I'd like to welcome Senator Hassell-Thompson and her staff, and the distinguished members of the Senate Standing Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction and the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary. The Committees have invited an impressive array of speakers today, including legal services providers, legal services clients, academics, and leaders of the private bar. We are pleased to be of service to you as you tackle an issue of such vital importance.

In particular, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to NYU alumni who will be testifying here today, including:

- Steven Banks, Executive Director, Legal Aid Society
- Andy Scherer, Executive Director, Legal Services NYC
- Christopher Lamb, Executive Director, MFY Legal Services
- Michael Rothenberg, Executive Director, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
- The Honorable Jeffrey Oing, Supervising Judge, NYC Civil Court
- Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause/NY
- David Udell, Director, Justice Program, The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law

NYU is proud to have so many alumni who have dedicated their careers to securing justice for low-income New Yorkers. Forsaking high salaries and prestige, they spend their days in the chaotic hallways of Family Court or in the overheated courtrooms of the Housing Part, zealously representing one client at a time.

NYU is deeply invested in the provision of civil legal services for the poor. Through our clinical courses, our students represent parents who have lost their children to foster care, young people accused of delinquency, and people re-entering the workforce after serving time in prison. In addition to training terrific legal services attorneys, we guarantee summer funding to every student working in a public interest placement, and help pay off their educational debt through our generous loan-repayment program.

Through The Brennan Center, we are working to close the “justice gap” by expanding the types of civil cases in which low-income people have a right to counsel. And through the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, we are advocating for enhanced protections for tenants in foreclosed properties.

Nevertheless, our efforts here at NYU are dwarfed by the size of the problem. For better or for worse, few people can successfully engage in the legal system without the services

of an attorney. Until poverty is eradicated, we need a paid, professional workforce to represent those who cannot afford counsel. Such a workforce requires a sustained financial commitment from all levels of government. In exchange, we will reap benefits both tangible and spiritual.