

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BROOKLYN BAR ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT AND PRO BONO PARTNERING LAW FIRM, AKIN GUMP, LAUNCH NEW FRONTLINE WORKERS INITIATIVE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Brooklyn, New York — In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), in partnership with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP (Akin Gump), has launched the VLP COVID-19 Frontline Workers Initiative.

The timely initiative focuses on recognizing the sacrifice and dedication of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East members by offering the free preparation of life planning documents - wills, health care proxies, powers of attorney, parental designation forms, and other life planning documents.

"We are honored to be of service at this time to the hard-working, essential, and often overlooked 1199SEIU members who are on the frontlines of this pandemic," said Anne O'Grady, VLP pro bono director.

The legal work will be conducted using technology to enable volunteer attorneys and healthcare workers to meet remotely in order to comply with social distancing guidelines and utilize interpretation services for individuals with limited English proficiency.

"1199ers have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic for months. They fought through the surge and are continuing to help lower the number of positive cases, while treating patients with the dedicated and compassionate care they need," said George Gresham, president of 1199SEIU. *"We thank the Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project and Akin Gump for recognizing the sacrifices of 1199 members and offering to provide needed legal advice and representation during this extremely difficult time."*

"We are excited to partner with the VLP on this crucial project to help New York City's frontline healthcare workers. We are happy to support a group that has been such a key part of the pandemic response and hope that our work will provide some measure of comfort and security in these uncertain times," said Akin Gump pro bono counsel, Lauren Connell.

The 1199SEIU members are on the frontlines working in nursing homes, home care settings, hospitals, clinics, and ambulatory services, caring directly for COVID-19 patients, putting themselves at high-risk of COVID-19 infection and placing their lives on the line by virtue of their work. With an understanding of the dangers of COVID-19, the initiative will provide 1199SEIU members with access to the planning and care for their families as well as designations for personal health care decisions and other life planning documents.

As an extension to life planning document preparation, the initiative will also offer pro bono services in probate matters should an 1199SEIU member pass away with or without a will. Volunteer legal assistance will be provided to families with member estates \$50,000 or less.

"While it is heartbreaking to know the need for these services is so great, the VLP will proudly assist 1199SEIU members to provide immediate support for our frontline heroes and their families," said Heidi Lee Henderson, VLP president and chief executive officer.

Additionally, upon intake, clients will be screened for general legal needs on matters such as consumer debt assistance, bankruptcy, foreclosure, custody, visitation, 17A guardianship and uncontested divorce. As appropriate, clients' other legal matters will be handled by VLP staff and volunteers.

For more information about the initiative or to get help, please visit www.brooklynvlp.org/covid-19-initiative-1199seiu. This initiative - and the VLP's ability to remain nimble and responsive - is made possible through the unrestricted support of individual and corporate donors. To join the VLP Emergency Response Campaign, please visit www.brooklynvlp.org/emergency-response-campaign and make a gift today.

About the VLP:

The mission of the Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is to ensure that the legal system is accessible to those who, because of special needs or the overwhelming burden of poverty, would not otherwise have their rights protected or their voices heard. Since 1990, the VLP has harnessed the powerful pro bono commitment of the private bar to provide critical civil legal services and equal access to the justice system to thousands of Brooklyn residents. As an essential legal lifeline, the VLP remains uniquely responsive to the evolving legal needs of Brooklyn's overlooked and underserved communities. For more information please visit: www.brooklynvlp.org.

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About Akin Gump:

Recognized for its sophisticated clients and capabilities as well as its outstanding team of legal professionals, Akin Gump is a global law firm, with 20 offices and more than 1,000 lawyers and advisors across a wide range of practices and industries. The Firm maintains a steadfast dedication to providing exemplary client service and an unwavering commitment to serving clients in need irrespective of ability to pay. More information can be found at www.akingump.com.

About 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East:

With over 450,000 caregivers, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East is the largest and fastest growing healthcare union in America. 1199SEIU represent workers in five states including Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, and the District of Columbia, and its mission is to ensure quality care and good jobs for all. Find more at www.1199SEIU.org.

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