

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CELEBRATING

THE BROOKLYN BAR ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT LAUNCHES NEW PROBATE INITIATIVE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BROOKLYN BAR ASSOCIATION 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 the Brooklyn Bar Association (BBA) Trusts & Estates Section and Surrogate's Court Committee has launched the VLP Probate Initiative.

As an extension of the VLP COVID-19 Frontline Workers Initiative serving 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East members and VLP life planning programs, this new initiative offers pro bono services in probate matters for qualifying New York City residents facing the untimely death of a family member as a result of COVID-19. Volunteer legal services will be provided to families with estates of \$50,000 or less, including completion of applications for voluntary letters of administration and SCPA 1310 affidavits regarding certain debts without administration.

“Brooklyn, the epicenter of COVID-19, has seen the most severe and devastating effects of the virus. New York City communities – specifically the most vulnerable and marginalized – continue to confront the loss of lives at alarming rates. The partnership between the VLP and the BBA Trusts & Estates Section and Surrogate’s Court Committee, formed in response to the unfortunate rise in COVID-19 related estate cases, offers assistance in a legal space not often served by the pro bono legal community. The initiative aims to provide relief and comfort to the many families weighted down by grief and devastation, and who most often lack access to critical legal services,” said Sidney Cherubin, VLP director of legal services.

“The vision for the initiative is to help those New Yorkers who have been hardest hit by the COVID crisis – those with limited financial resources who lost a loved one with a small estate,” said Daniel R. Antonelli, vice chair, BBA Trusts & Estates Section. *“While an estate may be small according to the law, these funds go a long way in supporting New Yorkers, especially in the current environment where many are out of work.”*

On Thursday, June 4, 2020, to recruit volunteer attorneys to serve the initiative, the VLP hosted a virtual CLE entitled Small Estates in Surrogate's Court in the Time of Corona in partnership with the BBA. Presenters included: Daniel Antonelli, Esq., Antonelli & Antonelli; Kerry D. Archer, Esq., Douglass Rademacher, LLP; Sidney Cherubin, Esq., director of legal services, VLP; Lisa Mathis, court clerk specialist, Kings County Surrogate's Court, Administration Department; and Pamela A. Walker, Esq., The Walker Firm PLLC. With over 40 attorneys in attendance, the CLE trained a significant group of volunteers, all of whom will continue to be mentored throughout their client engagements.

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

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/probate-initiative. This initiative 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 the BBA:

Established in 1872, the Brooklyn Bar Association's primary purpose is to promote professional competence among attorneys and increased respect for the legal system. For more information please visit:
www.brooklynbar.org.