

**New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice
Law School Virtual Conference
March 8, 2023 | 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm via Zoom**

Biographies

Keynote Roundtable: *Cultivating Civil Legal Justice Leaders to Address the Structural Challenges of Poverty, Injustice and Inequality*

Steven Banks, Moderator

Steven Banks is Special Counsel for Paul Weiss Rifkin Wharton & Garrison's Pro Bono practice, where he manages and oversees the firm's broader pro bono strategy and leverages firm partnerships with legal services organizations and clients to increase societal impact. From 2014 through 2022, Steve served as commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), the largest social services agency in the United States, managing approximately 16,000 staff serving over three million New Yorkers per year with an annual budget of \$12 billion.

In that role, he established and led reforms for many robust and high-impact DSS programs, including the first-in-the-nation Right to Counsel program for low-income tenants, expanded legal assistance for immigrants, Cash and Rental Assistance, Food Assistance, Medicaid and other programs that address income inequality, modernize and streamline access to public benefits, and prevent and ameliorate homelessness.

In April 2016, following a comprehensive review of the city's homelessness policies, former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed Steve to lead the Department of Homeless Services, in addition to the Human Resources Administration, as head of a joint management structure under the DSS. During his tenure, the DSS decreased evictions, reduced the number of families experiencing homelessness and residing in shelters, and dramatically enhanced and expanded assistance for low-income families and individuals.

Prior to serving in city government, Steve spent over three decades at New York City's Legal Aid Society, the country's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal aid organization. From 2004 to 2014, Steve was the attorney-in-chief at LAS, where he managed the legal practice and operations of the criminal, juvenile rights and civil programs run by the organization, which handles 300,000 legal matters each year in all five boroughs. At LAS, he had an extensive track record of working productively with a diverse and unionized workforce and helping the city's most vulnerable residents—including children and families, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants and people with HIV/AIDS—navigate DSS programs and services.

Steve was an inaugural member of former Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman's Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York and continued to serve on the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice until his appointment to Mayor de Blasio's administration.

In 2008, Steve helped reach a landmark settlement in *McCain v. Koch*, resulting in the establishment of a permanent enforceable right to shelter for families experiencing homelessness in New York City. For many years, he also served as counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless, enforcing the right to shelter for single adults.

Saima Akhtar

Senior Attorney, National Center for Law and Economic Justice

Saima Akhtar is a Senior Attorney with the National Center for Law and Economic Justice. She works on issues that include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (food stamps), cash public assistance, subsidized child-care, Medicaid and concerns of Due Process. Saima has represented low-income clients both in court and in administrative proceedings, and has served as counsel to the class in a number of class action cases in New York State Courts and Federal Courts including *Brooks v. Roberts*, *Richard C. v. Proud*, *Kamkoff v. Hedberg* and *A.A. v. Gee*. She has also provided continuing legal education sessions for the New York State Bar Association, The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, Practicing Law Institute, and the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association on topics such as SNAP basics, emergency assistance benefits in New York, New York State appellate practice and basic lawyering skills for new attorneys. Saima is a graduate of Albany Law School of Union University and holds a master's degree in Public Policy from the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy from the University at Albany. She is a recipient of Albany Law School's Edward M. Cameron Memorial Prize for her contributions to the area of public interest law and was a 2006 Fellow of the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society at the University at Albany.

Kim Diana Connolly

Professor; Vice Dean for Advocacy and Experiential Education; Director of Clinical Legal Education, University at Buffalo School of Law, State University of New York

Professor Connolly has focused her academic career on how best to educate future lawyers, as well as how best to use laws and policies to protect the planet and its inhabitants. She serves as the Vice Dean for Advocacy and Experiential Learning for the University at Buffalo School of Law and directs the [Clinical Legal Education Program](#). Her administrative approach is to support excellent experiential instructors offering innovative and exciting opportunities for law students to work either with clients or in simulated settings to prepare for the practice of law. Professor Connolly often presents and participates in collective endeavors that focus on experiential legal education, and has served in national leadership positions (including president of the [Clinical Legal Education Association](#)) for many years. Professor Connolly also studies, writes and speaks about environmental and animal law policies, creatively examining and sharing ideas as to how to move toward a sustainable future.

Before joining the law faculty at School of Law, Professor Connolly taught at the University of South Carolina School of Law, where she was associated faculty at the School of the Environment. Prior to her teaching career, she practiced law with a number of Washington, D.C., law firms, including Beveridge and Diamond and Hunton & Williams. She received her J.D., magna cum laude, from Georgetown University Law Center and her LL.M. with highest honors from George Washington University Law School. Professor Connolly did her undergraduate work in chemistry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she was a Morehead Scholar and served as a VISTA volunteer between college and law school. She also received a certification in Non-Profit Management from Duke University.

Hon. Craig D. Hannah

New York State Supreme Court Justice, Eighth Judicial District

Upon graduating from UB School of Law in 1995, Judge Craig D. Hannah practiced in a variety of positions, including as an assistant district attorney for the County of Erie, assistant corporation

counsel for the City of Buffalo Department of Law, and legal counsel for the New York State Senate. Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown appointed Judge Hannah to the Buffalo City Court in January 2006. Later that year, he was elected to a 10-year term and in 2016, Judge Hannah was re-elected to a second 10-year term. On May 1, 2019, he was appointed Chief Judge of the Buffalo City Court and Supervising Judge for the 11 City Courts within the Eight Judicial District. On June 3, 2022, Craig was appointed Justice of the New York State Supreme Court by Governor Kathy Hochul.

Judge Hannah has risen to nation fame as the presiding judge of the first opioid intervention court in the United States, established in May 2017. He has been featured by such major publications as the *New York Times*, *NBC News*, the *Denver Post* and *HBO Vice News*. Judge Hannah prides himself on working with participants at a one-on-one level and “meeting them where they are” with their recovery. As of February 2019, approximately 450 people have come before Judge Hannah, with approximately 120 currently enrolled in the intervention program. Those who have completed the program credit Judge Hannah with saving their lives while he humbly defers and states that all the praise and credit is due to the participant!

Judge Hannah is a native of Western New York, a graduate of Canisius College, and a member of the UB School of Law Dean’s Advisory Council.

Adrian Neil

General Counsel, Rochester City School District

Mr. Neil was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and immigrated to Brooklyn, New York, as a teenager. After high school, he attended the University of Rochester, where he majored in Political Science and English. While in Rochester, he became interested in law and interned at the Public Defender’s Office and the New York State Division of Human Rights. After college, he attended Brooklyn Law School, during which he interned with the NY State Courts, EEOC, NYCHA and participated in the Moot Court Honor Society. After law school, he worked in private practice at the Law Offices of Brown & Hutchinson, before joining the Rochester City School District Department of Law as an associate counsel several years ago.

He currently serves on the Monroe County Bar Association Board of Trustees and is a past co-chair of their Diversity Committee. In addition, Mr. Neil led the MCBA Diversity Clerkship Program for the MCBA. He is also a member of the Rochester Black Bar Association, a past member of their Executive Committee, a member of the Just Law program committee, and an appointed member of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice.

Shivani Parikh

Fordham University School of Law, Class of 2024

Ms. Parikh is a J.D. Candidate and Stein Scholar for Public Interest and Ethics at Fordham Law School. She grew up in Rockland County, NY and graduated from Cornell University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She is a racial justice advocate for South Asian Americans and committed to trauma-informed, movement/community lawyering that expands immigrants’ rights, curtails the War on Terror’s surveillance project, and provides legal support for Desi families & workers who are building power. She is the President of the North American South Asian Law Students Association (NASALSA), a board member of Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus, and a member of the Clinton Global Initiative University 2023 cohort.

William P. Quigley

Clinical Professor of Law Emeritus, Loyola University New Orleans, College of Law

Bill Quigley served as a law professor and Director of the Law Clinic and the Gillis Long Poverty Law Center at Loyola University New Orleans. Bill has been an active public interest and human rights lawyer since 1977. Bill has served as counsel with a wide range of public interest organizations on issues including Katrina social justice issues, public housing, voting rights, death penalty, living wage, human rights, civil liberties, educational reform, constitutional rights and civil disobedience. Bill has litigated numerous cases with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the Advancement Project, and with the ACLU of Louisiana where he was General Counsel for over 15 years. He has been an active lawyer with School of the Americas Watch and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. Bill served as Legal Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights in NYC from 2009 to 2011 before returning to Loyola.

Plenary Panel: *Artificial Intelligence and Access to Justice: Challenges, Opportunities and Ethics*

Raymond H. Brescia, Moderator

Hon. Harold R. Tyler Chair in Law and Technology and Professor of Law at Albany Law School

Professor Brescia combines his experience as a public interest attorney in New York City with his scholarly interests to address economic and social inequality, the legal and policy implications of financial crises, how innovative legal and regulatory approaches can improve economic and community development efforts, and the need to expand access to justice for people of low and moderate income. He is the author of “The Future of Change: How Technology Shapes Social Revolutions” (Cornell University Press, 2020), which examines the intersection of technology and social movements, from the American Revolution, to the present day. He is also the co-editor of two books: “Crisis Lawyering: Effective Legal Advocacy in Emergency Situations” (New York University Press, 2021); and “How Cities Will Save the World: Urban Innovation in the Face of Population Flows, Climate Change, and Economic Inequality” (Routledge 2016). His forthcoming book, “Lawyer Nation: The Past, Present, and Future of the American Legal Profession,” will be published by NYU Press in the fall of 2023.

Before coming to Albany Law, he was the Associate Director of the Urban Justice Center in New York, N.Y., where he coordinated legal representation for community-based institutions in areas such as housing, economic justice, workers' rights, civil rights and environmental justice. He also served as an adjunct professor at New York Law School from 1997 through 2006. Prior to his work at the Urban Justice Center, he was a staff attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance and the Legal Aid Society of New York, where he was a recipient of a Skadden Fellowship after graduation from law school.

Professor Brescia also served as Law Clerk to the pathbreaking Civil Rights attorney-turned-federal judge, the Honorable Constance Baker Motley, Senior U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of New York. While a student Yale Law School, Professor Brescia was co-recipient of the Charles Albom Prize for Appellate Advocacy; was a student director of several clinics, including the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic and the Homelessness Clinic; and was Visiting Lecturer in Yale College.

Renee L. Danser

Associate Director, Research and Strategic Partnerships, Access to Justice Lab, Harvard Law School

Drawing on her knowledge of justice system operations and the pressures on the justice system, Ms. Danser joined the Access to Justice Lab at Harvard Law School to incorporate rigorous research into improving access to justice. Ms. Danser believes that for our research to be impactful, we must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the communities reviewing and incorporating it. Using her court management and non-profit leadership experience, Ms. Danser encourages courts and the justice community to think about their needs and the needs of their users and how to successfully balance those interests.

Sateesh Nori

Executive Director, JustFix

Sateesh is a lawyer and housing advocate who worked in legal services in New York City for 20 years. He is an Adjunct Clinical Professor of Law at NYU Law School, where he co-teaches the "Housing Rights Clinic." Now, at JustFix, he hopes to bring law and technology together to supercharge impact on the human right to housing.

Andrew M. Perlman

Dean and Professor of Law, Suffolk University Law School

Andrew Perlman is the dean and professor of law at Suffolk University Law School. He has played a leadership role in various initiatives, both nationally and locally, to improve access to legal services through technology and innovation, including through his service as the vice chair of the ABA Commission on the Future of Legal Services, the inaugural chair of the governing council of the ABA's new Center for Innovation, and a member of the Access to Justice Advisory Committee at the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. During his time as dean, Suffolk Law has become a national leader in developing tools that have helped to address the access to justice crisis, such as through its award-winning Legal Innovation & Technology Lab.

Elizabeth Tran

Legal Services Director, Houston Volunteer Lawyers

Elizabeth Tran has been practicing law for 13 years and currently is the Legal Services Director at Houston Volunteer Lawyers (HVL), which is the largest provider of pro bono services in Texas. Her main practice areas are family law and immigration with an emphasis on serving survivors of violence and crime. Elizabeth found herself serving as a technology expert as a response to the pandemic. HVL's operations had to quickly pivot from in-person services to a 100% remote environment with Elizabeth leading the way in created an online triage system to manage the thousands of clients seeking legal services.