NYU Law Launches Clemency Resource Center

“Factory of Justice”: Pop-up, pro-bono law office to submit petitions to major clemency initiative.

NEW YORK—July 14, 2015—NYU School of Law announced the launch of the Clemency Resource Center (CRC), a pop-up law office within the Center on the Administration of Criminal Law (CACL).

The CRC will exist for one year, with the sole purpose of preparing and submitting federal clemency petitions at no cost to prisoners. Beginning with a staff of seven attorneys, the CRC will work closely with Clemency Project 2014, an ongoing initiative designed to identify and find counsel for worthy clemency candidates, and will provide pro bono assistance to federal prisoners who likely would have received shorter sentences had they been sentenced today.

The CRC was co-founded by Rachel Barkow, Segal Family Professor of Regulatory Law and Policy at NYU Law, and Mark Osler, who holds the Robert and Marion Short Distinguished Chair in Law at the University of St. Thomas. Erin Collins, a former public defender and acting assistant professor at NYU Law, serves as executive director. Generously funded by Open Society Foundations, the CRC will begin work in August.

The CRC is unique in that it addresses an immediate short-term opportunity. President Obama has clearly signaled his intent to use the constitutional tool of clemency to address over-incarceration.

Clemency Project 2014 aims to identify all federal inmates who seek help and meet criteria released by the US Department of Justice. The project relies entirely on the help of pro bono attorneys to review and submit petitions. “Too many non-violent prisoners are serving unduly harsh prison terms based on repudiated laws and policies. That means we have quite a bit of work ahead,” said Cynthia Roseberry, project manager for Clemency Project 2014. “This is an all-hands-on-deck situation and we welcome the support of the Clemency Resource Center.”

“The CRC isn’t a clinic, or a conventional legal aid organization, or an advocacy group. It is a factory of justice,” said Osler, a former federal prosecutor.
CACL has worked on clemency cases and reform of the pardon process since 2013 as part of the Mercy Project, an initiative that pursues commutations for federal prisoners who are serving very long sentences for typically non-violent drug crimes.

“The Clemency Resource Center is the latest step in our efforts to improve criminal justice in the United States and to help correct past miscarriages of justice,” said Barkow, faculty director for CACL.

During its year of operation, the CRC will utilize the talents of CACL student fellows as well as of CACL executive director Deborah Gramiccioni, a former federal prosecutor in New Jersey and at the US Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

About the Center on the Administration of Criminal Law (CACL) at NYU School of Law
An apolitical advocacy organization and think tank dedicated to promoting good government practices in the criminal justice system, the Center on the Administration of Criminal Law analyzes important issues of criminal law, particularly focusing on prosecutorial power and discretion. CACL pursues this mission through research, litigation and the improvement of public policy, and is the first and only organization dedicated to defining good government practices in criminal prosecutions.

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