



**Open Letter to the 2020 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll Registrants
from Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring**

March 30, 2021

On behalf of the D.C. Courts, in partnership with the D.C. Access to Justice Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center, we want to express our profound appreciation to each of you who qualified for recognition on the 2020 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll. As you may know, since 2011 the D.C. Courts have recognized attorneys who have contributed 50 hours or more of pro bono work to those who cannot afford legal counsel. As chief judges, we are acutely aware of the severe hardships faced by low-income individuals who all too frequently must represent themselves in proceedings, often against represented parties. We are also aware of the growing need for access to pro bono services as thousands of D.C. residents confront the stresses of reduced income and new legal challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. We salute you for using your talents and expertise to help those unable to afford an attorney, and rely on your continued dedication and compassion in the face of new challenges that threaten equal access to justice.

You are part of a record-breaking year for the Honor Roll, made particularly notable because it occurred during a global pandemic. Each year we are deeply moved by the incredible number of registrants for the Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll, and this year surpassed expectations. In 2020, 5,223 attorneys registered for the Honor Roll, with 3,161 (more than 60%) providing one hundred hours or more of pro bono service and thus qualifying for the High Honor Roll. This represents at least 419,200 hours of pro bono service. It is deeply gratifying to see that the D.C. Bar members' commitment to pro bono spans across all different aspects of practice. The 2020 Honor Roll members represent all sectors of our diverse legal community, with members hailing from 168 different firms, as well as those who are solo practitioners, and others who work for federal and local government agencies, corporations, associations, law schools and public interest organizations.

We are tremendously proud of the robust tradition of pro bono service by attorneys in the District of Columbia. We applaud those who embrace their ethical obligation, as contained in Rule 6.1 of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct, to perform at least fifty hours of pro bono work annually. The District of Columbia is fortunate to have a truly extraordinary cadre of legal services organizations whose attorneys work tirelessly every day to make access to justice a reality. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw even greater need for pro bono service in 2020. We also understand that the pandemic likely impacted many 2020 Honor Roll members greatly, making their service even more impressive. We can only anticipate the severity and urgency of the need for pro bono service growing throughout the pandemic recovery. The continued dedicated work of pro bono counsel is simply indispensable to our civil justice system. It will take all of us, working together, to make the equal access to justice a reality in DC.

Thank you for answering – and in many cases exceeding – the call to service embodied by Rule 6.1. We know that your service is based not only from a commitment to your ethical obligations but also on your principled belief in equal access to justice. We are proud to recognize your dedication by including your name on this year's Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Blackburne-Rigsby".

Hon. Anna Blackburne-Rigsby
Chief Judge
District of Columbia Court of Appeals

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anita Josey-Herring".

Hon. Anita Josey-Herring
Chief Judge
Superior Court of the District of Columbia