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December 19, 2018

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTER—Community-based housing lawyer position available

The Public Interest Law Center is seeking applications for a staff attorney to ensure that low-income families in Philadelphia are able to live and thrive in safe, healthy, and affordable rental homes. The attorney will use a community lawyering approach to ensure a voice for communities in combatting uninhabitable housing, unresponsive landlords, discrimination in Landlord-Tenant Court, and all-too-frequent evictions that create poverty and trauma, and can leave families homeless.

The attorney will represent clients in legal actions, including defending against eviction complaints and bringing affirmative suits, and help clients to connect with other legal and technical expertise needed to achieve their goals. In addition to legal actions, the attorney will be expected to provide policy and strategic guidance to community clients; and engage in advocacy, community organizing and coalition-building.

The attorney will be paired with a community organizer, both of whom will join the Law Center's growing housing project. Collectively, their relationship building, leadership training opportunities, and successful advocacy will also build community infrastructure, laying the groundwork for low-income tenants to respond collectively and independently to other, related or emerging threats to their wellbeing and financial security.

In conjunction with the housing team, the attorney will identify three neighborhoods in which to commence targeted organizing and community education based on factors such as areas with the highest eviction rates, clusters of unlicensed landlords, clusters of buildings owned by offending landlords, poor health outcomes, or high rates of poverty. Working with these communities, the attorney and organizer will develop tenant-centered, data-centered, plans for each of the three communities, identify the communities' key housing priorities, describe how those priorities may be addressed, establish activities for engaging more residents, and set measurable, tailored outcomes.

The end goal of the project is to have more low-income Philadelphians living in safe, healthy housing. Accordingly, the attorney will train community members, bring affirmative suits, and serve as a legal backstop for engaged tenants that become the target of landlord retaliation. As a result, the job will be rewarding, but also requires a candidate who is both sensitive to high-stress situations and empathetic to client populations who often find themselves in precarious situations.

Primary activities include:

1. Community engagement and education, relationship building in affected communities, and establishing strategic and collaborative partnerships.
2. Provide legal representation for tenants in affirmative and defensive lawsuits including developing legal theories, factual investigation, research, discovery, trial, appeals and enforcement.
3. Represent clients before local, state and federal agencies and advocate on their behalf with government officials.
4. Provide advice, legal counsel, and training to promote self-advocacy.
5. Participate in local, regional and national policy advocacy to advance the interests of communities.
6. Connect individuals and community groups with needed outside resources to achieve strategic objectives.
7. Identify and pursue, with other Law Center lawyers, high impact litigation solutions to improve the health and housing conditions of the communities served by the attorney.

The lawyer also will participate in the leadership of the organization including attendance at board and staff meetings, development projects and ongoing administrative projects.

The lawyer reports directly to the Legal Director and the head of the Law Center's housing project.

Qualifications. The candidate should have at least three years of experience practicing law, but outstanding candidates will be considered at any stage of experience. We will not focus on any single qualification, but are especially interested in candidates who demonstrate enthusiasm about our mission; interest and experience in working with clients of diverse backgrounds, including people experiencing poverty; initiative, creativity, and an entrepreneurial approach to cases and strategies; and excellent analytical abilities and well-developed writing and research skills.

The Public Interest Law Center is a nationally-renowned public interest law firm with a mission of using high impact legal strategies to advance the civil, social, and economic rights of communities in the Philadelphia region facing discrimination, inequality, and poverty. We use litigation, community education, advocacy, and organizing to secure their access to fundamental resources and services. Areas of focus include a high-quality education, healthcare, housing and community services, employment, environmental justice and the unencumbered right to vote.

The position is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The salary and benefits are commensurate with experience.

The Public Interest Law Center is an equal opportunity employer. We are especially eager to receive applications from candidates who contribute to the diversity of our organization, including, but not limited to, people of color, people living with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ community.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, with an expected closing date of January 15, 2019.

To apply, email a letter of interest which describes relevant experience, a resume with salary requirements, a short writing sample of ten pages or less, and contact information for at least three references to:

William Burstein
Public Interest Law Center
United Way Building
1709 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103
wburstein@pubintl.org

For more information: www.pubintl.org

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