

The AALS Section on Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunities (PBPSO) announces Professor Ryan Sullivan as the 2022 PBPSO Access to Justice Award winner. The Access to Justice Award honors those who manage Pro Bono Programs and who have removed barriers to justice and/or improved legal services to individuals unable to pay for such services.

Professor Sullivan is a Clinical Associate Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska College of Law where he supervises student attorneys providing legal services to veterans and underserved populations in the areas of tenant rights, debt collection defense, criminal record rehabilitation, estate planning, family law, and other civil matters. His timely and transformational work with the Tenant Assistance Project Rights Project has helped to keep more than 600 Nebraskan families in their homes following the expiration of Covid-19 eviction moratoriums. Since its inception in April 2020, the Tenant Assistance Project has achieved a 98% success rate in preventing immediate evictions and has also connected tenants with over \$5 million in federal aid for rental assistance. Moreover, his exemplary service and commitment to access to justice has increased pro bono opportunities and engagement of the Nebraska law student base, including the formation of a student organization that supports the work of the Tenant Assistant Project.

In addition to supporting the day-to-day work of representing clients, Professor Sullivan also has worked with senators in the Nebraska Legislature on the introduction of legislation that provides tenants in eviction proceedings the right to court-appointed legal counsel and provides for a filing fee to offset the cost to the county. Professor Sullivan and students who have participated in the Tenant Assistance Project shared testimony during legislative hearings affirming their support and sharing stories of the clients they have represented. The Tenant Assistance Project has underscored the importance of legal representation and the need for and benefit of providing right to counsel in eviction cases. The proposed legislation will ensure that tenants' rights are preserved, as well as protect the judicial system from granting unlawful evictions.

Dean Richard Moberly stated:

“The commitment that Professor Sullivan has to this program, pro bono work more generally, and to Nebraska Law students is hard to match and is a reminder to all of us in the academy and those in the legal profession of the importance of pro bono work. Our obligation is to serve others and make sure that our legal system is accessible. Professor Sullivan demonstrates a consistent commitment to that obligation, and he has committed himself to instilling that mindset in a future generation of leaders.”

Professor Sullivan will be presented with the Access to Justice Award during the virtual 2022 AALS Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 8, 2022.