David Fleischer Helps with Rollout of Landmark New York Pro Bono Program

By David Fleischer | August 14, 2019

Private practice lawyers like Haynes Boone Senior Counsel David Fleischer and David Ratner, formerly of Hartman, Ule, Rose & Ratner, LLP, are playing a vital role to assist New York City as it rolls out its ambitious, first-in-the-nation program to provide free legal counsel to indigents facing eviction.

New York in 2017 became the first city to enact a Right to Counsel law entitling low-income residents to free legal representation in eviction proceedings in housing courts. The program — aimed at reducing homelessness — is being phased in and is expected to be available city-wide by 2022.

The program has already led to a significant increase in the rate of tenant representations in court, according to data from the NYC Office of Civil Justice. Still, logistical challenges remain including finding and training enough qualified lawyers to handle the increased number of cases. The city has funded organizations like CAMBA, a Brooklyn-based provider of legal assistance and other services to low-income residents, to represent clients in eviction cases. CAMBA has a highly skilled staff who handle the cases but has had to hire many newly admitted attorneys to keep up with the implementation of the new Right to Counsel program.

Thankfully, lawyers like Fleischer and Ratner are stepping in to help. Fleischer was put in touch with CAMBA to assist on eviction cases. He has teamed up with Ratner, to develop an eight-hour trial training program for roughly 25 CAMBA staff attorneys. The program will be presented at Haynes Boone's New York office during two, four-hour sessions; the first installment is scheduled for early August and the second will be presented in early September.

Ratner has represented tenants for his entire career, first at a legal services program and then in private practice. Recently retired, he is eager to share his deep experience handling cases in Housing Court.

Fleischer has represented clients in complex commercial disputes for more than 25 years. He participates in the New York State Unified Court System's "Attorney Emeritus" program, which pairs experienced trial lawyers 55 years of age and older with approved pro bono legal service programs. The lawyers help in myriad ways to help meet the growing needs of New Yorkers who cannot afford counsel.

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