

Greater Hartford Legal Aid offers a fresh start to 54 clients at a pro bono Pardon Clinic.

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GHLA Pardon Clinic Helps 54 Clients

Greater Hartford Legal Aid hosted a one-day pardon clinic last month at its Asylum Avenue offices, helping 54 men and women erase criminal records and get a fresh start.



Lawyers, law students and legal staff from The Hartford, The Travelers Companies, Inc., Shipman & Goodwin, Robinson & Cole and the University of Connecticut School of Law assisted with the effort, and a team of community partners recruited and pre-screened applicants.

Participating organizations included the [Urban League of Greater Hartford](#), the Center for Latino Progress, Community Partners in Action and Capital Workforce Partners.

GHLA attorney Sue Garten, who organized the clinic, noted that about 1 million adults in Connecticut have a criminal record. “Everyone who is granted a pardon will tell you that it is liberating to once again be able to work and live without the fear of being judged and denied the opportunity to build a better future,” she said.

Attorney Ling Ly, a member of The Travelers volunteer team, said, “We were inspired by the applicants’ stories of overcoming hardship and dedicating themselves to living better lives.”

The state Board of Pardons and Paroles has the authority to erase an individual’s state criminal record. GHLA works with the legal volunteers to complete applications, submit them to the board and accompany participants to pardon hearings. Last month’s clinic was the first step for applicants, and GHLA reported that seven completed applications had been filed as of Nov. 12.

Attorney Lisa Levin, who led The Hartford’s volunteer team, said: “We learned that the pardon process is about forgiveness and restoration of individuals’ rights. It was a tremendous honor to help people begin the process of liberating themselves from their past mistakes and enabling them to work and live without fear of judgment and reprisal.”