

PLSE Launches New Library of Peer-to-Peer Videos About The Pardon Process

January 29, 2020 – Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) announced today that its new Pardon Video Library is now available to the public on its website, <http://plsephilly.org/pardon-video-library/>.

“This is an exciting day for us,” said PLSE Board Ryan Allen Hancock in making the announcement. “We estimate that there are 100,000 low-income Philadelphians who have turned their lives around since they were involved with the criminal justice system, and who deserve a second chance for themselves and their families that only a pardon from the Governor can provide. These short, 3-5 minutes videos will help everyone understand what the process is, and how they can make their best case for a pardon, without having to go to a lawyer or even leave their homes.”

PLSE’s Video Project was launched in February 2019 with a grant from the Thomas Skelton Harrison Foundation. With it, PLSE hired Dragon Productions - a student-staffed production company, run by industry professionals and based out of Drexel University’s Film & Video Program – who filmed the first eight “Pardon Coaches”. On-camera interviews were conducted by Renee Chenault Fattah, veteran Philadelphia investigative reporter and television news anchor, who is also a member of the PLSE Board of Directors. She then created scripts for the short, accessible videos. The first five (out of a projected ten) address these topics:

- Why is a Pardon important?
- What is the Pardon Board looking for?
- How hard is the process? What’s it like?
- How do you prepare?
- What can you do to show that you are involved in the community?

Those sharing their experiences and providing their insights as Pardon Coaches had been convicted of forgery, theft, robbery, prostitution, dealing drugs, assault, and carrying an unlicensed gun. Several of them had been convicted of three or more different crimes, over several years. One had his pardon application denied.

Appearing as one of the Pardon Coaches in the videos is the Honorable Brandon Flood, Secretary of the Board of Pardons, who himself served time in prison and received a pardon from Governor Wolf. “I had only recently been appointed Board Secretary when PLSE contacted me, and I was only too happy to participate,” said Secretary Flood. “We want people who have been convicted of crime to see that a pardon is a viable option today in Pennsylvania. Knowing that will help them continue to be productive citizens. They will see there’s a light at the end of the tunnel.”

“Video is a very effective way to reach people, wherever in Pennsylvania they live,” he continued. “We thank PLSE for its creativity and helping us get the word out to those who deserve a second chance.”

The next five Pardon Videos are expected to be posted on the PLSE website in late spring.

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ABOUT PLSE: PLSE provides free legal representation to low income residents of Philadelphia whose criminal records are holding them back from achieving their potential as productive, contributing citizens. The services include seeking expungements in criminal court and pardons from the Governor, educating elected and community leaders, creating community-based Pardon Hubs, and empowering under-resourced communities to seek a greater voice and needed systemic reforms. PLSE is a recipient of the Barra Award as an Exemplary Non-Profit Organization.