

RYAN HANCOCK, PLSE CO-FOUNDER AND “EXEMPLARY VOLUNTEER”, WINS PHILA BAR ASSOCIATION’S HIGHEST HONOR FOR VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

December 5, 2018 – Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) announced today that Ryan Allen Hancock, Of Counsel to the firm of Willig, Williams & Davidson, has received the Philadelphia Bar Association’s PNC Achievement Award. The Award “honors significant accomplishments in improving the administration of justice.” The Bar Association’s announcement noted that “Hancock has dedicated his career to helping low-income Philadelphians overcome past criminal convictions through pro bono litigation and the cofounding of Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, where he has served as board chair since its beginning. PLSE has become widely recognized for helping Philadelphians expunge criminal records that can hinder them from attaining employment, housing and other benefits for which they are otherwise qualified. In 2009, the first criminal record expungement clinic took place and was attended by over 300 people. In 2018, PLSE is launching the Pardon Project, a system that will allow for the filing of thousands of pardon applications for individuals who have turned their lives around and are being held back by past criminal convictions.”

Hancock received several nominations for the Achievement Award. One was from Marieke Tuthill Beck-Coon, Director of Litigation of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. She wrote about “[t]he comprehensive scope of Ryan’s dedication to promoting employment opportunities in communities burdened by over-policing, over-incarceration, and the resultant oppression of criminal records.” Michael Hardiman, currently a Commissioner with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission who worked with Hancock for eight years at the Commission, noted Hancock’s ever-present “willingness to help others” and “strong commitment and persistence” to “vigorously enforcing existing statutory rights ... [and] in advocating for changes to our processes ... in order to more effectively and efficiently protect individual rights.”

Joining them in nominating Hancock for the Award was Mike Lee, who co-founded PLSE and was its first Executive Director. Describing PLSE’s growth from a simple idea to a successful statewide model, Lee wrote, “Without fail, as our workload expanded so did Ryan’s pro bono time. No task is above Ryan. From copying orders to calling clients, Ryan made time to nurture the non-profit and mentor me.... His compassion for people is only matched by his legal talents as an attorney.” Tobey Oxholm, PLSE’s current interim executive director and a former winner of the Award, wrote: “Simply put, Ryan Hancock is a truly exemplary volunteer, amazing for his vision, energy and commitment and the countless hundreds of hours he has served pro bono with and through this organization that he founded... [yet] virtually no one knows of him or his service.”

“I was speechless when I was told, and am humbled by the recognition,” said Hancock. “We who are so privileged to be lawyers are really the ones who benefit from pro bono service. Every time I volunteer, without fail, I am amazed by what our clients manage to push through and get over each and every day, and I leave inspired and energized by their examples. I accept this Award in their names, and with renewed commitment to give my best to help create a truly equitable society.”

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, and empowering under-resourced communities to seek a greater voice and needed legislative reforms. PLSE was twice recognized in 2017 as an exemplary non-profit, with both a 2018-19 Barra Award, and the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation’s Goffman Award.