



## Michael Solomonov, Internationally-Acclaimed “Outstanding Chef” and Innovative Restaurateur, Joins PLSE Board of Directors

June 25, 2018 – Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) announced today that Philadelphia chef and restaurateur Michael Solomonov has accepted an appointment to PLSE’s Board of Directors. Solomonov is known for his landmark Philadelphia restaurant Zahav, for Dizengoff, Abe Fisher, Goldie, and Federal Donuts, and for winning multiple awards from the James Beard Foundation including “Outstanding Chef” in 2017, “Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic” in 2011, and “Best International Cookbook” and “Book of the Year” in 2016 for his and business partner/co-author Steven Cook’s first cookbook, *Zahav: A World of Israeli Cooking*.

“PLSE is all about helping people get second chances after having made some bad decisions in life. Mike Solomonov understands and appreciates our mission. He is the perfect advocate for renewal and forgiveness,” said Stuart Davidson, a member of PLSE’s Board who has known him for years. “Mike is a creative thinker and energetic force who is determined to change how society thinks about and responds to people with criminal record histories. PLSE is lucky to have him. Philadelphia is lucky to have him.”

In the non-profit arena, Solomonov and Cook along with their partners at Federal Donuts, are perhaps best known for creating Rooster Soup Co. in 2017, a restaurant at 1526 Sansom Street which donates 100% of its profits to support vulnerable Philadelphians through Broad Street Ministry’s Hospitality Collaborative.

“While I’ve had some success, I have also had some very dark days when I was struggling with addiction,” said Solomonov. “It was thanks to many others that I got clean and created a whole new story for my life. As a society, we have to be ready to forgive people who went through a bad stretch and made some bad choices, and since then have turned their lives around. Some are now the people quietly and proudly giving back to their communities. I am proud to have been asked to help PLSE because I believe in its mission and care deeply for the people of this city.”

The overlap between alcohol, drugs and crime in Philadelphia is very high. As Mayor Kenney’s Opioid Task Force reported last year, 74% of inmates tested positive for use of one or more drugs on admission to jail in Philadelphia. Pennsylvania has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country. It has been estimated that over 60% of those living in poor or minority neighborhoods in Philadelphia have been arrested. Readily available over the internet, criminal record histories are frequently misunderstood and used, often illegally, to deny credit, academic opportunities, jobs, careers, housing, and even admission into nursing homes. Criminal record histories also stop parents from going on class trips, coaching youth teams, and volunteering for community activities. PLSE files more criminal record expungement petitions than any other organization in the country and later this year will begin representing clients seeking pardons from the governor.

**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.