

PLSE Announces New Leadership, Becomes Black-Led at Both Staff and Board Levels

September 16, 2021 – Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) announced today that Renee Chenault Fattah, JD, has been appointed Executive Director, and Taylor E. Pacheco, Esquire, Deputy Executive Director. The appointments are effective immediately.

“We are absolutely delighted to have such a strong leadership team in place as we begin PLSE’s second decade of service to low-income Philadelphians,” said Judge Karen Yvette Simmons, Chair of the PLSE Board of Directors. “There is simply no doubt that criminal records – the past, entries in books – are preventing not just individuals, but their families and whole communities from reaching their potential. Thanks to the very strong partnership we have with the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons, the pardon process today is free and accessible, and over eighty percent of the people who apply are actually ending up with pardons. To spread that news and energize our efforts, there could not be anyone better than Renee Chenault Fattah – a widely known, greatly respected, award-winning journalist, lawyer, and community leader.”

Chenault Fattah joined PLSE in June as Deputy Director. Her credits included a judicial clerkship in a federal appeals court, private practice, a master’s degree in journalism, and several decades as one of Philadelphia’s best-known television news anchors. Most recently, she wrote, directed and produced the pathbreaking documentary on the devastating impacts dementia has had on communities of color. She has quickly become the face of PLSE, as she has reconnected with elected officials, business and civic leaders in her new role. Taking her place as Deputy Executive Director is Taylor E. Pacheco, who has been a staff attorney with PLSE since October 2019. Pacheco had prior legal experience in the child welfare and criminal justice systems as a child advocate and public defender, and has quickly risen in leadership among young lawyers in the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

PLSE began as an initiative of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild and was incorporated on August 28, 2011. It received the prestigious Louis J. Goffman Award for outstanding public service from the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation in May 2017, a Barra Award for organizational excellence in November 2017, and most recently, the 2021 Greater Philadelphia Innovation Award in January 2021.

“From the start, our goal has been and remains to serve and reflect the unjustly underserved people and communities here in Philadelphia and, through our pardon project, throughout the state,” said PLSE co-founder and Board Chair Emeritus Ryan Hancock. “We are proud of, and even amazed at what PLSE has achieved in its first decade, in partnership with so many dedicated and gifted men, women and community organizations. Black women in the PLSE board and staff leadership roles, together with their richly diverse and talented board and staff, will be powering PLSE to even greater heights of commitment and accomplishment in its next decade.”

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.