



Bankruptcy Law Pro Bono Clinic

The FSU Bankruptcy Pro Bono Clinic, led by Professor Michael Macchiani, starts its fourth semester next month. So far in 2025, the Clinic has responded to inquiries from 128 persons and has filed 27 Chapter 7 cases for persons in need. Additionally, the Clinic has helped several additional clients who requested assistance in pending cases. The Northern District of Florida is one of the leading districts for pro se bankruptcy filings. The Clinic is making a significant impact in the community. Special thanks to Dean O'Hara O'Connor and Chief Judge Speck for their support of the Clinic.

First Amendment Clinic

Florida State University College of Law's First Amendment Clinic, led by Clinical Professor Bettina B. Davis, will support from Clinical Supervising Staff Attorney Shreya Kelly, surpassed expectations by representing 13 pro bono clients across seven states. Among the accolades include three in the U.S. Supreme Court—and preparing demand letters, legal memoranda, and other advocacy on behalf of a diverse range of individuals and organizations. Working alongside Shreya B. Bowen, Lawson Nash Goulet, and Duke Sine Smith's First Amendment Clinic, the Clinic also provided students with extensive hands-on experience in client representation, case strategy, legal research, and drafting while defending all five First Amendment freedoms.



Director's Welcome



(L-R) Professor Paolo Armino and Professor Darin Kengren Scott, Co-Directors of the Public Interest Law Center.

The first half of 2026 has been productive and exciting at the Public Interest Law Center. We hope you enjoy this mid-year update featuring a collaborative submission by the International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic to the UN Special Representative on summary, extrajudicial or arbitrary executions; a grant secured by the Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic on "Increasing the Update of Advanced Care Directives in Hospital and Clinical Settings"; and the Children's Advocacy Clinic and clinical law students managed 69 active child abuse neglect cases participated in 62 hearings, and led six statewide workshop meetings for Florida attorneys representing child survivors of human trafficking.

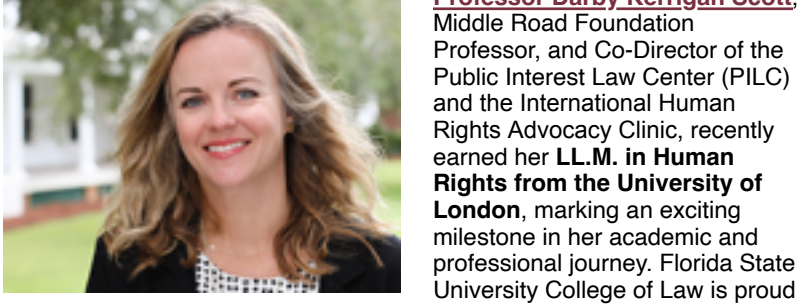
In addition, we are thrilled to announce our upcoming events: the third annual Claude Pepper Elder Law Mock Court Competition on October 9-10, 2025; the International Human Rights and the Death Penalty Symposium on November 13, 2025; and the 18th annual D'Almeida & Palmer Lecture in International Human Rights on February 11, 2027. We are proud to share the accomplishments of our terrific students including our annual clinical student award recipients, the 2026 Ellis Medal recipient, the 2026 D'Almeida Ellis Fellow, 2026 Alternative Spring Break participants, and student publications. Happy reading!

International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic

The FSU College of Law International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic (IHRAC), in collaboration with Florida's Pro Attorneys to the Death Penalty (PADP) and FSU Law Admin Professor and alumna to the Death Penalty, responded to a call for inputs by the UN Special Representative on summary, extrajudicial or arbitrary executions on February 27, 2026. The collaborative submission addressed the death penalty from the perspective of the prohibition against torture and other forms of ill treatment and the protection of human dignity.

[Click here](#) to read the UN Submission.

[Click here](#) to read the Report of the Special Representative on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.



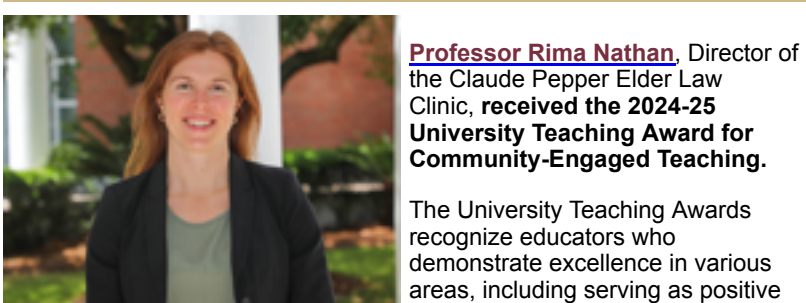
Professor Delmy Kariem Scott, Nadia Road Foundation Professor, and Co-Director of the Public Interest Law Center (PILC) and the International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic, recently received the U.S. & Human Rights from the University of London, marking an exciting milestone in her academic and professional journey. Florida State University College of Law is proud to celebrate Professor Scott's achievement and dedication to advancing human rights and public interest law.

The Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic

FSU College of Law's Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic has been awarded the "Increasing the Update of Advanced Care Directives in Hospital and Clinical Settings" grant. Florida State University, through FSU Health, has awarded \$250,000 to the five inaugural residents of the Clinical Catalyst Grant Program, an initiative that brings together FSU researchers and local clinical providers to address healthcare challenges through collaborative projects.

The grant aims to make end-of-life planning easier and more accessible for patients and families, while helping reduce unnecessary medical treatments and costs.

[Click here](#) to read more about the grant.



Professor Rima Nathan, Director of the Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic, received the 2024-25 University Teaching Award for Community-Engaged Teaching.

The University Teaching Awards recognize educators who demonstrate excellence in various areas, including serving as positive role models, fostering respect for truth and a passion for learning, challenging students to think critically, showing deep respect for all individuals, and utilizing innovative teaching methods.

Professor Nathan was quoted in a *Miami Herald* article titled "System to protect Florida seniors operates without oversight." The article examines concerns that Florida's system for protecting vulnerable seniors often operates with little oversight, allowing state workers to remove older adults from their homes without court involvement or due process.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

Professor Nathan was also featured as a guest on *The Elder Law Coach* podcast. The episode, "How A Law School Elder Law Clinic Transforms Practice: Key Attorneys' Perspectives on Elder Law," explores the critical legal issues affecting older adults and highlights Nathan's expertise in the field.

[Click here](#) to listen.

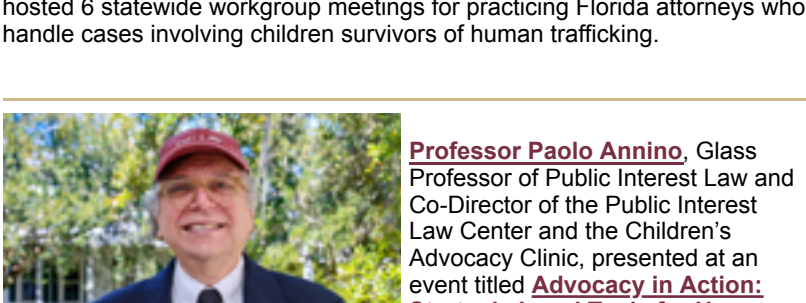
Professor Nathan was featured in a *Florida State University News* article, "Faculty spotlight: How FSU's Rima Nathan turns legal education into action." Highlighting how community-engaged education benefits both students and the seniors they serve, the article directly with low-income older adults in cases spanning estate planning, elder financial exploitation, and more. It emphasizes the personal work, empathy, and professional judgment that define effective advocacy. The Clinic also plays a vital role in developing client-facing communication skills, teaching students to navigate sensitive conversations with care and clarity while ensuring clients receive the highest quality of service.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

The Children's Advocacy Clinic

The Children's Advocacy Clinic, supervised by Professors Paolo Armino and Erinna Dalton, is having an exceptional year. Professor Armino and Dalton are thrilled to collaborate with 26 brilliant, dynamic law students dedicated to handling adoption, human trafficking, and children disability cases. This year, the Children's Advocacy Clinic has 69 children cases and has handled 82 hearings.

In Spring 2026, law students at the Children's Advocacy Clinic filed a brief in the First District Court of Appeal arguing that a client should receive a Medicaid Waiver due to severe developmental disabilities. Also, under the leadership of 3L student Jilani Nakhle, the Children's Advocacy Clinic hosted 6 statewide workshop meetings for practicing Florida attorneys who handle cases involving children survivors of human trafficking.



Professor Paolo Armino, Glass Professor of Public Interest Law and Co-Director of the Public Interest Law Center and the Children's Advocacy Clinic, presented at an event titled *Advocacy in Action: Strategic Legal Tools for Human Rights Trafficking Cases* involving Clinicians, with the help of two 2L students, Emma Smith and Valerie Bunk, both members of FSU's Trafficking Pro Bono Team and Project (TFLP), a project within the Children's Advocacy Clinic.

Professor Armino also received the 2025 *Imagined Freedom: Ordinance Award* by Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center in recognition of his teaching and dedication to the TFLP program, which aimed at educating and representing children who have survived sex and labor trafficking, provides community presentations and outreach on human trafficking, and advocates for legislation to prevent trafficking in Florida and the United States.



The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Law Project (HTELP) was honored to present at Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center, one of the leading human trafficking prevention organizations on the state, on February 20, 2026. The presentation, *Schools & the Law: Hidden in Plain Sight-How Schools Can Prevent and Identify Human Trafficking and Provide Trauma-Informed Responses to Child Traffickers*, provided an overview of Florida's legal framework governing child trafficking and its intersection with public education.

Presenters included Clinical Professor Erinna Dalton, Professor Armino, 3L Emma Smith, 3L Valerie Bunk, 3L Emma Chapman, and Dr. Michele Gayle, Deputy Superintendent of Leon County Schools.

Upcoming Events

This academic year, 2026-27, the [Public Interest Law Students Association \(PILSA\)](#), in collaboration with PILC and Career Services, is hosting two dynamic programs in Human Rights at FSU College of Law.

Join FSU College of Law for the [Healthcare is a Human Right: Medicaid Expansion in Florida](#) event on September 9, 2026. The event will feature a panel discussion with Disability Rights Florida, the Florida Health Justice Project, Florida Decides Healthcare, and the National Health Law Program.

On January 27, 2027, join us for the event, [Housing is a Human Right](#) which will feature Maria Focantini, founder of the National Homelessness Law Center and author of the recent book, [Just Housing](#) for 2L, which was a finalist for the ALBA 2026 Silver Gavel Award.

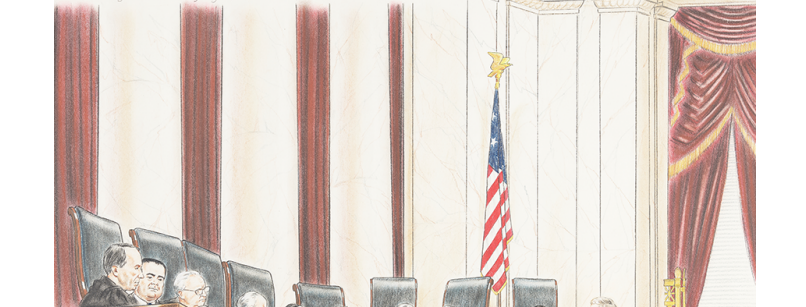
The Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic is proud to host the 2026 [Claude Pepper Elder Law Mock Court Competition](#) at FSU College of Law. This national event welcomes teams from across the country to showcase to compete in a series of rounds as they address this year's topic on Consumer Protection issues within Nursing Facilities.

We are honored to, again, partner with the AARP Foundation in putting on the event to highlight critical issues affecting older adults while showcasing meaningful career paths for students dedicated to advocacy and public service.

The competition will take place **Friday, October 9, and Saturday, October 10, in the Advocacy Center**—formerly home to Florida's First District Court of Appeal—with an **awards dinner and ceremony** to follow. The first round will be **live-streamed**.

Serving as chief of staff for the competition this year is **3L Sarah Chai**, one of our very own most round competition. Through this role, Chai will hone her advocacy skills and be an asset to the overall organization of the competition to help ensure we meet the highest standards.

If you are an alumni interested in volunteering as a judge or brief grader for the competition, please email elstevenspaul@gmail.com. Volunteer opportunities include both in-person and virtual options and CLE credit is offered.

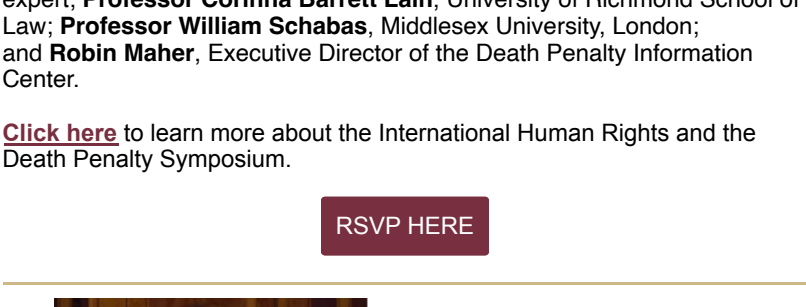


This symposium is made possible by the funds donated in Sandy D'Almeida's memory. Professor "Bob" Sandy D'Almeida's journey before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Herrera v. Collins*, October 7, 1992.

Florida State University College of Law will host an [International Human Rights and the Death Penalty Symposium](#) on **November 13, 2026**, which will convene an exceptional group of globally recognized scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

The symposium will examine capital punishment through an international human rights lens. Discussions will explore legal, ethical, and comparative perspectives, fostering rigorous and informed dialogue on one of the most complex and controversial issues in modern law. Distinguished speakers include [Steven Heien Project, Teaching \(D'Almeida\)](#), former President of Amnesty, Maria Rios, former deputy in Italy, Canada, and Deputy, [Mark Oliver](#), a nationally recognized death penalty litigation expert, [Professor Corbin Bartlett](#), University of Richmond School of Law, [Professor William Schabas](#), McGill University, London, and [Robin Maher](#), Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the International Human Rights and the Death Penalty Symposium.



FSU College of Law is pleased to announce that former Supreme Court Justice of Canada [Justice Abella](#) will serve as the speaker for the 18th annual [D'Almeida & Palmer Lecture in International Human Rights](#).

Justice Abella, who served as a Canadian Supreme Court Justice from 2004-2021, will visit [Florida State University College of Law](#) on **February 11, 2027**. We are honored to welcome Justice Abella to our campus.

The D'Almeida & Palmer Lecture in International Human Rights is made possible through the generosity of Rima Palmer, Esq., and was established to educate the community about the vital field of international human rights, inspire our students, and contribute to the broader global dialogue on human rights issues. Previous speakers in the series have included former U.S. Ambassador Mark Brodzinski (2026), former President of Island Mary Robinson (2025), Ambassador David Satterly, the first U.S. Ambassador to sign for the United States (2024), and former General Counsel of the U.S. Navy Alberto J. Mora (2023).

The event is free and open to the public.

Student Highlights

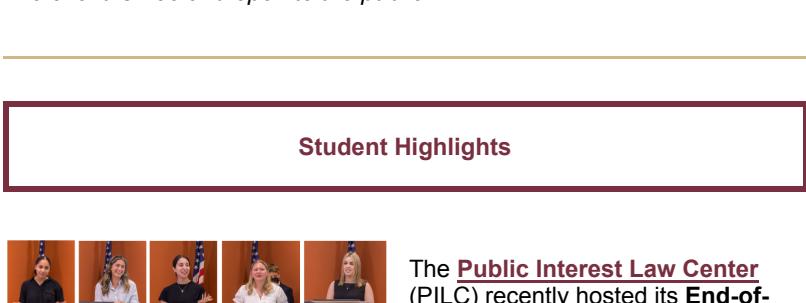


The Public Interest Law Center (PILC) recently hosted its **End-of-Year Celebration**, gathering students, faculty, and staff to reflect on a year of impactful work and service to vulnerable populations.

The event highlighted the many accomplishments of PILC's clinics, showcasing the **meaningful contributions students have made through advocacy, direct representation, and community engagement**.

(L-R) Top Row: 3L Kaithelee Aree, 3L Valerie Bunk, 3L Jilani Nakhle, 3L Emma Chapman, and 3L Julia Wilts. Middle Row: 3L Abby Kennedy, Sofia Higgins, 3L Krista Marocco, 3L Nathan Simola, 3L Arielle Smith, 3L Anastasia Smith, 3L Danielle Cullen, Bottom Row: 3L Arielle Smith, 3L Sara Boka, 3L Jessica Featherston, and 3L Clint Meyer.

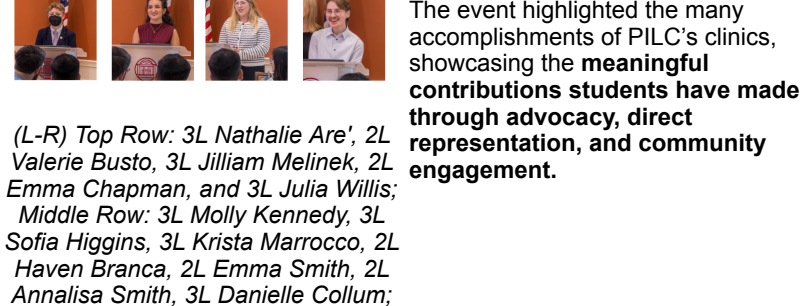
Attendees also took time to recognize outstanding students for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to public interest law. The celebration served as a fitting close to the academic year, honoring both the clinic's achievements and the students who make this work possible.



During the [D'Almeida & Palmer Lecture in International Human Rights](#) on **March 13, 2026**, 3L Jonathan Cardon was named the recipient of the Ellis Medal, and 1L Zou Chen was named the 2026 D'Almeida Ellis Fellow.

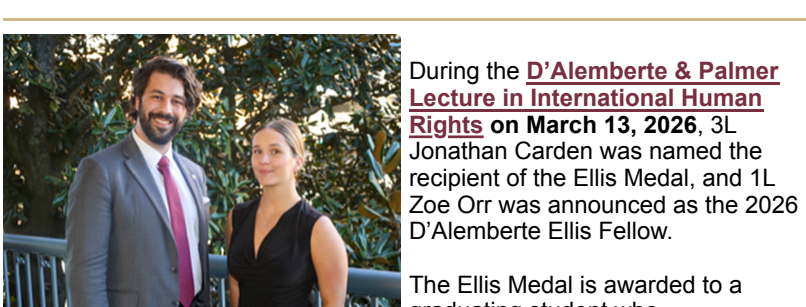
The Ellis Medal is awarded to a graduating student who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement, leadership, and meaningful service to the College of Law.

(L-R) 3L Jonathan Cardon and 1L Zou Chen.



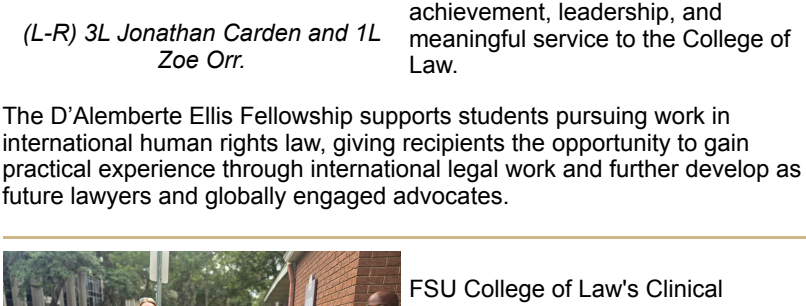
FSU College of Law's Clinical Professor and Director of the Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic, [Bliga Bunk](#), recently partnered with the Legal Services of South Florida (LNSF) Tallahassee Pro Bono Team to host an [Estate Planning Clinic](#) for the community. Law students from the Elder Law Clinic and the Tallahassee Pro Bono Team spent the day assisting new clients with estate planning and advance directive documents and needs.

(L-R) Jaydyn Burkett, LNSF Case Manager, Professor Rima Nathan, Alexia Fulton (25), 1L Katelyn Roberts, 3L Austin Chen, Kelly Ratliff, LNSF Law Office Coordinator, Elizabeth Kennedy, LNSF Pro Bono Coordinator, and Center Young LNSF Pro Bono Project Manager Attorney.



FSU Law [Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic](#) students 3L Arielle Smith and 3L Connor Catalano attended a [negative hearing on SB 198](#), a bill aimed at protecting workers from wage theft involving virtual currency loans.

The students supported the bill alongside volunteer attorneys at AARP Florida. SB 198 has since received favorable votes and moved to the [Rules Committee](#) for further consideration, and was said on the table. The act is expected to take effect January 1, 2027.



Each year, students apply to be among the cohort selected to travel to a farmworker community in Apopka, Florida, in the College of Agriculture's Farmworker Education program, which took place March 13-19, 2026. Hosted by the Farmworkers Association of Florida, the program teaches students about immigration, human trafficking, and environmental justice. Students hear about the lived realities of migrant farmworkers, which creates a meaningful and lasting impact. Alternative Spring Break is a transformative program that immersively connects the needs and challenges faced by the students who participate in it.

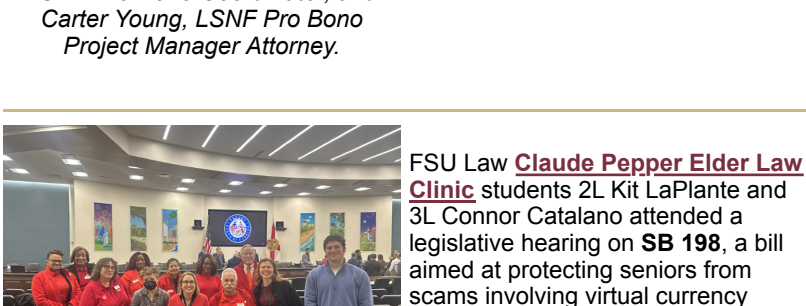
[Click here](#) to read the article from Jessica Featherston (26).

"Alternative Spring Break was one of the most impactful experiences I have had at FSU College of Law. The people that work at that farmworker community in Apopka, Florida, in the College of Agriculture's Farmworker Education program, which took place March 13-19, 2026, reminded me of why I came to law school in the first place. . . . There are members of our community who are in cross hairs and we have a duty to not abandon them out of convenience. Alternative Spring Break reminded me of that and has motivated this belief in me. It is something I will take with me forever."

- 3L Anthony Moraleao

"Hearing personal testimonies from people who had actually made the crossing from Mexico to the United States, and seeing how they were in the community who were engaged in advocacy and heard how their parents may be taken away was difficult to hear and also incredibly important to developing an understanding of how these legal issues have detrimental effects on people. This was an incredibly developmental experience that I am lucky to have experienced during my journey through the rest of law school and into my legal career."

- 1L Josh Carson



The Florida State University College of Law's International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic Research Assistant and alumna, [Jessica Featherston](#) (26) wrote an article titled "Woman, Life, Freedom": Rights to Life to Advocacy Through the Eyes of Self-Determination, which appeared in the book *Women, Life, Freedom: Rights to Life to Advocacy Through the Eyes of Self-Determination*, which appeared in the *International Human Rights of Women Spring 2023* course, and was recently selected for publication in the *National Lawyers Guild Review* (April 2026).

Learn More About PILC



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