

# CLINICAL PROGRAMS

## 2025 NEWSLETTER

### First Amendment Clinic



Florida State University College of Law has launched a new academic and legal initiative designed to make a meaningful impact on constitutional law while preparing students for high-level legal practice: **The First Amendment Clinic**. The first and only clinic of its kind in Florida and in the nation, the clinic focuses on addressing legal issues involving *all five* freedoms protected by the First Amendment: assembly, petition, press, speech, and religion.

The clinic is led by **Clinical Professor Denise M. Harle**, a nationally recognized constitutional litigator and experienced appellate advocate. Harle brings decades of experience to the role, having served as senior

counsel at **Alliance Defending Freedom**, deputy solicitor general in the Florida Attorney General's Office, and as a partner at **Shutts & Bowen LLP**.

*"The excitement surrounding the launch of this clinic is a testament to both the need for this work and the caliber of leadership guiding it. We are deeply grateful to Professor Harle for bringing her nationally recognized expertise and unwavering commitment to constitutional advocacy to FSU Law. Under her leadership, the clinic will provide our students with an exceptional opportunity to engage in meaningful, real-world work at the intersection of law, public service, and democratic values."*

- Erin O'Hara O'Connor, Dean of the Florida State University College of Law



The **First Amendment Clinic** hosted its inaugural event, “**SCOTUS Preview: Free Speech on the Docket,**” drawing a packed audience of former Florida Supreme Court justices, community leaders, faculty, alumni, and students. The program marked the clinic’s first major public event, highlighting its mission to foster thoughtful dialogue on the nation’s most pressing free speech issues.

The discussion focused on two pending U.S. Supreme Court cases. In ***First Choice Women’s Resource Centers v. Platkin***, the court considered whether organizations may challenge state subpoenas that chill First Amendment speech and association in federal court.

The panel also examined ***Chiles v. Salazar***, which asked whether states may prohibit licensed counselors’ speech to minors experiencing gender dysphoria, or whether such bans violate the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses.

The panel featured nationally recognized voices from across the ideological spectrum, including **Professor Jane Bambauer** (University of Florida), **Erin Morrow Hawley** (Alliance Defending Freedom), **Michelle Kallen** (former Virginia Solicitor General), **Cameron Norris** (Consovoy McCarthy), and **Denise Harle** (Director of the FSU First Amendment Clinic), who moderated the discussion.



*“The First Amendment Clinic’s SCOTUS event preview gave me a deeper understanding of the pressing free speech issues currently before the Court. Hearing directly from speakers who are involved in the cases discussed, as well as from others who have argued related matters, provided us with a valuable firsthand perspective. This event further inspired my passion for public interest law and displayed the unique opportunities the Clinic offers at FSU Law.”*

- 2L Morgan Hughes

## The Bankruptcy Law Pro Bono Clinic

We have just completed the first year of the **Bankruptcy Pro Bono Clinic**, and the results are exceptional. The Bankruptcy Clinic has assisted dozens of individuals on a pro bono basis, including the filing and prosecution of several successful Chapter 7 cases, making a real difference in the lives of the clinic’s clients.

Through an Administrative Order of the United States Bankruptcy Court, the clinic students are recognized as Student Attorneys and are authorized to represent actual clients in actual bankruptcy cases in the **Bankruptcy Court in Tallahassee**.



*Professor Michael Markham, Director of the Bankruptcy Pro Bono Clinic*

Every FSU Law student involved with the clinic has appeared and presented at multiple hearings before the Bankruptcy Court and represented clinic clients at creditor meetings before the Bankruptcy Trustee.

We look forward to the impact our students will continue to make on behalf of the greater community.

# FSU | PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTER

## Director's Welcome



2025 was a banner year for the FSU College of Law Clinical Programs. We welcomed a new **Bankruptcy Law Pro Bono Clinic**, which received rave reviews from students and clients, and the **First Amendment Clinic** officially opened its doors, hosting dynamic events.

**Additionally, this year, across every one of our Public Interest Law Clinics, our students trained to become excellent lawyers while also cultivating empathy, generosity, and a deep sense of responsibility to others.**

Carl Sandburg once asked, *“Why does a hearse horse snicker hauling a lawyer away?”* At FSU Law, there is no snickering—our students go beyond the law’s logic to its heart: people. **Throughout the year, they collected more than 300 pounds of groceries and organized Toy Drives, Senior Care Drives, and holiday fundraisers to support members of our community.**

The heart of our students was on full display in their unwavering commitment to clients. Time and again, they went above and beyond the call of duty, ensuring not only strong legal representation but also care for their clients’ overall well-being amid significant challenges.

This year’s highlights reflect that dedication: achieving a significant legislative victory through the passage of a bill preventing human trafficking; representing vulnerable children in more than 100 hearings; securing green cards for family members of a survivor of human trafficking; distributing girls’ empowerment materials in schools throughout Ghana; launching a website to strengthen cross-border collaboration to combat human trafficking in West Africa; training nearly 100 judges on elder domestic violence protection; and hosting 18 teams from across the nation for the Claude Pepper Elder Law Moot Court Competition.

Here’s to another year of learning, service, and helping clients.

**- Professor Darby Kerrigan Scott and Professor Paolo Annino, Co-Directors of the Public Interest Law Center**

## **International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic**

This year, students in the **International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic** prepared 'know-your-rights' materials to educate individuals about their rights within the criminal legal systems of Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Students created advocacy materials to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in Senegal.

3L Jessica Featherston launched a website to strengthen cross-border collaboration in combating human trafficking in West Africa and developed promotional materials to raise awareness of the Refugee Act, 2024, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



*“Through the International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic, I worked alongside an activist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop a campaign advocating for a new refugee bill. This experience was incredibly rewarding and gave me meaningful, hands-on exposure to international human rights policy work.”*

- 3L Jessica Featherston

FSU Law students worked to further civic education and empowerment of women and girls across Ghana.

While in her 3L year, alumna Ashvi Luthra ('25) traveled to Ghana and worked with the **Human Rights Advocacy Center** to elevate awareness of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act.

*“Going to Ghana was easily one of the greatest experiences of my life. Not only was the Human Rights Advocacy Center working on an amazing project, but it was made up of amazing people.”*

- Ashvi Luthra ('25)



Students also prepared an advisory memorandum on press freedom in Eswatini and a policy brief on addressing hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation. Finally, students produced **a video on “Human Rights Cities: An Introduction”** to educate elected officials and community activists on the myriad ways local governments can play an active role in advancing human rights.

## Guest Lecturers



As part of a day-long visit to FSU on October 29, **Albie Sachs**, a renowned human rights activist, lawyer, writer,

and former justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, delivered a special guest lecture to students in the Public Interest Law Center.

On October 30, alumnus **Bruce Blackwell ('74)**, former Executive Director of Funding Florida Legal Aid and recipient of the Tobias Simon Pro Bono Service Award, delivered a guest lecture to students in the Public Interest Law Center.



## Farmworker & Immigration Rights Clinic

It's been a busy year for the Farmworker & Immigration Rights Clinic. Our students, working under the supervision of **Professor Erika Nyborg-Burch**, engaged in written and oral advocacy to secure crucial protections for our clients.

Students drafted briefs and motions and prepared evidentiary filings for immigration court hearings, including two final hearings. There, they conducted direct examinations of clients and their family members and delivered closing arguments. We also represented clients in family court hearings, with one judge praising our students for some of the highest-quality briefings he has seen.



(L-R) 2L Sara Boles, 3L Nathalie Are', 3L Jake Schexnaydre, and 3L Ethan Dittman

Our clients' compelling testimony and our students' effective representation translated into protective family court orders and multiple grants of special immigrant juvenile status. Furthering family unity, we also helped two of our clients obtain green cards to reunite with their mother, a survivor of trafficking.

Students helped a client remain at liberty to raise her young child under federal detention policies, with students preparing a habeas petition and parole request that persuaded federal agents not to detain her.

Outside the courtroom, students assisted clients in obtaining work authorization, starting businesses, challenging housing discrimination claims through legal processes, and connecting with trauma-informed care.

The clinic also collaborated with community organizations and national nonprofits to support farmworkers and their families, partnering with [Earthjustice](#) to submit public comments and responses to OSHA in support of a proposed heat-stress standard.



*"I've had the privilege of working alongside incredible advocates committed to justice. Whether the work is preparing for hearings, drafting declarations, or witnessing moments of family reunification—like seeing a mother reunited with her daughters after nearly a decade apart—this clinic truly embodies what it means to practice law with empathy and purpose."*

- 3L Nathalie Are'

*"The clinic changed my life. Every client I met and case I worked on alongside my brilliant classmates showed me the resilience of our community, the realities of the current immigration system, and the deep need for pro bono legal services. I witnessed firsthand how a small group of law students could help change real lives."*

- 3L Julia Willis



## The Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic



*Elder Law Clinic students present information at the Wakulla Senior Center.*

*(L-R) 2L Jaden Wildridge, 3L Veronica Porges, 3L Krista Marrocco, 2L Kennedi Ray, 3L Kate Winegardner, 2L Madilyn Otero, 3L Morgan Palermo, 2L Zenani Johnson, 3L Joe Uecker, (seated) and graduate fellow Alexis Fulton ('25)*

It was a busy year for students in the **Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic**, who were hard at work providing holistic services across Leon, Wakulla, and Gadsden Counties—drafting wills and advance directives, handling probate matters, and addressing housing and consumer issues. We continue to value our various collaborations, including with **Legal Services of North Florida**, which led to a settlement that allowed an older adult to remain in her home with disability accommodations.

Community outreach was extensive at the Wakulla and Tallahassee Senior Centers, Capital Health Plan's Healthy Aging Day, and numerous neighborhood and school programs. We expanded our work with FSU Senior

Health and continued partnering with [Opening Minds Through Art](#), providing students with hands-on experience working with older adults in long-term care settings. The clinic also organized a food drive for Elder Care Services, Inc., restocking an empty pantry with help from the law school community.

We hosted several educational events, one of which we partnered with the [Office of the State Courts Administrator](#) on a webinar that trained nearly 100 judges on elder domestic violence protection, thanks in large part to our graduate fellow, [Alexis Fulton](#). We also held a public screening of *Prison Terminal*, featuring filmmaker Edgar Barends and Laura Musselman of the [Humane Prison Hospice Project](#), to highlight compassionate end-of-life care. We continue to collaborate with local firms to offer programming at places like [Gretchen Everhart School](#), where we assist in educating parents on guardian advocacy.

Nationally, the [Claude Pepper Elder Law Moot Court Competition](#) brought in 18 teams, with generous prize support from the [AARP Foundation](#). We also secured a partnership with Uber to offer complimentary rides to clients facing transportation barriers. Finally, several student papers were published in the [National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys' Journal](#), marking the close of another milestone year.

*"I thoroughly enjoyed my time working in the Elder Law Clinic. The experience was incredibly hands-on, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with all our clients. Professor Nathan is a fantastic mentor and made the clinic an exceptional experience. I would highly recommend anyone interested in elder law, estate planning, or probate to take this class!"*

*- 3L Morgan Palermo*



## The Children's Advocacy Clinic



*(L-R) Row 1: Professor Emmalyn Dalton and 2L Emma Chapman; Row 2: 2L Valerie Busto, 2L Elliot Weber, and 3L Madison McFerran; Row 3: 2L Annalisa Smith, 2L Joy Manassaram, 2L Kayla Shen, and 2L Haven Branca; Row 4: Professor Annino (wearing a Krispy Kreme cap), 2L Nick McDonough, and 2L Emma Smith*

**The Children's Advocacy Clinic**, supervised by Professors Paolo Annino and Emmalyn Dalton, stands at the forefront of public interest law, championing the rights and well-being of Florida's most vulnerable children: trafficked children, medically fragile children, children with severe disabilities, and infants.

We celebrated a major legislative achievement with the passage of a bill preventing human trafficking. We filed three appeals before the Florida District Court of Appeal and represented children in **over 100 hearings, including those related to** foster care, juvenile delinquency, Medicaid, adoption, public benefits, and special education.

The clinic also launched two statewide workgroups addressing solitary confinement and human trafficking prevention. We continued our outreach to the local runaway shelter, presenting Know Your Rights workshops, and initiated a quarterly Q&A webinar for parents of medically fragile children.



(L-R) Joey Capers ('25) and Professor Emmalyn Dalton

This year, our students organized successful food and toy drives, as well as a gift card fundraiser. Thank you to Jessica Featherston, Elliot Weber, and Joey Capers.

**Professor Emmalyn Dalton** and alumnus Joey Capers ('25) with the mountain of toys collected for the children served by the **Children's Advocacy Clinic** earlier this year.

When many families faced food insecurity earlier this year, PILC students led by 2L Elliot Weber came together to step up for the Tallahassee community and organize a Student Food Drive for OASIS, a food pantry that provides food to young women and young mothers receiving services there. The effort resulted in more than **300 pounds of groceries** donated by the FSU Law community.



(L-R) 3L Valerie Busto, 2L Elliot Weber, and a Representative from Oasis, Food Pantry



*“I participated in the food drive out of a strong personal and social responsibility to support our local community. My daily work with vulnerable clients in the clinic reinforced how critical that support can be and motivated me to help meet immediate needs in Tallahassee.”*

- 3L Valerie Busto

*“I gained invaluable experience in the clinic working alongside other students who share my passion for making a difference in children’s lives through legal advocacy. Working hands-on with clients and seeing the impact of my work has been the most rewarding part of my law school career. Professors Annino and Dalton care deeply about equipping the next generation of lawyers to continue fighting for the most vulnerable clients.”*

- 2L Emma Chapman



## PILC News

Last year, a new Florida law highlighting the impact of experiential learning at the College of Law took effect. **House Bill 1237**, which requires annual training for public school personnel to recognize and respond to signs of human trafficking, was shaped in part by recent graduates **Lauren Evans ('25)** and **Tazara Fields ('25)** through their work with the Public Interest Law Center.



Under the mentorship of **Professors Paolo Annino and Emmalyn Dalton**, the students contributed to the development of the legislation by conducting research, providing testimony, and collaborating with stakeholders throughout the legislative process. The law is expected to strengthen protections for school-aged children across Florida.

Read the articles:

- [\*Florida Politics\*](#)
- [\*WCTV\*](#)
- [\*FSU News\*](#)



**Professor Paolo Annino** was featured in a [\*Tampa Bay Times\*](#) article, "*Florida Moms of Disabled Children Denied Medical Care Pin Hope on Old Lawsuit*," which discusses how Professor Annino and the FSU Law students working in the **Children's Advocacy Clinic** are handling a high volume of appeals on behalf of families challenging **Sunshine Health's** claim denials.

Professor Annino and his clinic students are deeply familiar with these issues—he represented families in a similar lawsuit against the State of Florida in 2012.

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**Professor Rima Nathan** 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.



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