



From the Executive Director



The 2024 Year of the Dragon is starting off with a roar. It's an exciting time of growth for The Legal Clinic (TLC), with an expanded staff and a renewed effort to advocate for justice on behalf of our immigrant communities.

In just the first few months of the year, TLC's legal team fielded requests from over a dozen Hawai'i residents with removal (deportation) orders or asylum matters. Very few attorneys in the state can take the time to represent such cases on a pro bono basis. Thanks to the ongoing support from many of you, our legal team is ready and able to respond.

As in past years, TLC has joined with the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) and the Filipino Legislative Caucus to advocate for several pro-immigrant bills at the state level. SB2787 would allocate funding for a new Immigrant Services and Access Unit in the State's Office of Community Services. Read on for additional bills that you can support. To submit testimony, visit www.capitol.hawaii.gov/docs/testimonyinstructions.pdf to register for an online Hawaii State Legislature account.

The recent U.S. Senate debates around asylum matters serve as a sobering reminder of how quickly the fate of thousands of immigrants can be impacted through policy change. In this election year, we will need all hands on deck to protect immigrant rights in Hawai'i and beyond.

Bettina Mok
Executive Director



Opening Day at the Hawaii State Legislature, Feb. 17, 2024. Left to right: TLC attorney Neribel Chardon; TLC board member Amy Agbayani; Hawai'i Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald; Senator Karl Rhoads; TLC executive director Bettina Mok; and TLC board member Liza Ryan Gill.



TLC staff and language interpreters advocated for comprehensive language access with Representative David Tarnas on Language Access Lobby Day on Feb. 1, 2024 at the Hawai'i State Capitol, organized by the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR). Advocates emphasized the crucial role of language access in disaster preparedness and recovery.

Client Story

The Vital Role of Interpreters and Employer Advocacy at a Client's Hearing

In November 2023, TLC attorney Neribel Chardon advocated for one of TLC's clients in immigration court. The client, a native and citizen of Philippines, is a grandmother and a longtime legal permanent resident. She was detained and placed in removal proceedings upon returning from a family funeral visit abroad. The client's native language is Ilocano. As such, to guarantee her due process right, the Immigration Court needed to provide her with a language interpreter. However, the client's individual hearing was delayed for five months because of the limited availability of interpreters for the Immigration Court. In the meantime, the client remained separated from her family, unable to work and take care of her ill husband.



TLC senior staff attorney Neribel Chardon and TLC client

After diligently trying the case in court, TLC's legal team was successful in obtaining the cancellation of removal and release from detention.

The client's employer, an owner of a well-established Honolulu restaurant, served as a key witness during the hearing and highlighted the client's contributions to their business, the community and the local economy. The employer's testimony played a pivotal role in the court's decision. The granting of the cancellation of removal order was not just a legal triumph but a moment of profound joy and relief for the client and the family.

Agency Updates



TLC senior staff attorney Neribel Chardon (top left) and other community advocates participated in a video call with Andrew Geibel (bottom right) of U.S. Senator Hirono's office regarding the Senate's supplemental funding bill proposal that would decimate the U.S. asylum system, choking off access to protection for many.

TLC urged social media followers to call Senator Schatz' and Senator Hirono's offices to stand in opposition of this bill, which fortunately did not pass. Please follow us on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) for future updates.

Please Testify in Support of these Bills

[HB2107 RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES:](#) Appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. The House Committee on Finance passed the measure with amendments.

[SB2787 RELATING TO IMMIGRATION:](#) Establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit. Declares that the general fund expenditure is exceeded. Makes an appropriation.

[SB2783 RELATING TO MEDICAID:](#) Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services for Medicaid coverage under the Children's Health Insurance Program for income-qualified pregnant persons and children, regardless of immigration status. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.

[SB2782 RELATED TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:](#) Requires the Office of Enterprise Technology to develop multilingual accessibility standards. Appropriates funds to establish one full-time position to develop multilingual accessibility standards within the Office of Enterprise Technology Services. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.

Save the Date! TLC Benefit Event - April 11, 2024



STAND UP FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE PAU HANA

Honoring the 2024 Guardians of Immigrant Justice:

UNITE HERE! LOCAL 5
DINA SHEK OF MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIP
TERRINA WONG OF PACIFIC GATEWAY CENTER

April 11, 2024 | 5-7pm

Café Julia, 1040 Richards St, Honolulu, HI

JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL EVENING INCLUDING
PUPUS, DRINKS, SILENT AUCTION, LIVE MUSIC, AND MORE

TICKETS \$150
ADVOCATE SPONSORSHIP \$3,000
CHAMPION SPONSORSHIP \$5,000
CHANGEMAKER SPONSORSHIP \$7,500

GIVEBUTTER.COM/TLCBENEFIT24



Parking available at Alii Place Garage (cash only; closes at 8pm), Bishop Square Parking Garage, and street parking

WWW.TLCHAWAII.ORG

TLC's mission is to ensure justice for low-income immigrants and migrants in Hawai'i through high-quality immigration legal services, education, and advocacy.

Support TLC/Donate Here

TLC Staff & Board Highlights:



Join TLC in congratulating paralegal Megan Crimmins, who has now achieved U.S. Department of Justice Accredited Representative (partial) status. This accreditation allows non-attorneys to provide specific immigration legal services under attorney supervision. Congratulations!

Welcome to TLC's newest staff members...

- Joshua Abeyta, Equal Justice Works Disaster Resilience Fellow (Attorney)
- Neribel Chardon, Senior Staff Attorney
- Katherine Cheng, Administrative & Grants Manager
- Luella Costales, Director of Development and Operations
- Jamaica "Mai" Cullen, Engagement and Development Coordinator
- Viridiana Preciado, Legal Assistant
- Nanor Wong, Staff Attorney

... and to TLC's newest board members!

- Robin Campaniano, Chief Executive Officer (retired) / AIG Hawaii Insurance Company
- Alexis Fuke, Senior VP-Public Finance Investment Banking / Raymond James & Assoc., Inc.
- Quentin Koch, President & CEO / Blue Hawaiian Helicopters and Activities
- Jon Kei Matsuoka, Executive Director / Honpa Hongwanji Hawai`i Bestuin

Read more about our staff and board members [here](#).

Seeking Law Students for Summer Paid Internship Opportunity!

Gain hands-on experience during a 2024 TLC summer internship in immigration law. This year, the focus will be on immigration status consequences of certain criminal charges. Please visit our [website](#) to learn more and how to apply.



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