

Sheppard Mullin Attorneys Receive the 2023 Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award

01.03.2024

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP is pleased to announce that it has awarded the 2023 Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award to associates Keren Baruch, Zachary Golda, Chris Lawrence and Kayla Malone.

Keren Baruch, an associate in the Corporate Practice Group in the New York office, is an enthusiastic pro bono advocate who encourages her corporate practice group colleagues across the firm to participate in pro bono. This past year, Keren served as a Guardian ad Litem for an orphaned 14-year-old girl caught in a custody battle. After leading a team of attorneys to conduct a thorough investigation and generating a detailed report regarding the best interest of the child, the judge stated in her order that it “wishes to thank the guardian ad litem, Keren Baruch, Esq. for the extraordinary legal services rendered on behalf of her ward.” Keren also demonstrated a dedication to aiding immigrant crime victims with U-Visa and the Violence Against Women Act petitions, and conducting a number of credible fear interviews for asylum applicants. Finally, Keren also worked on matters for the Innocence Project and supported small businesses and non-profits with their corporate needs. Keren received her J.D. from St. John’s University, *magna cum laude*, and a B.A. from the State University of New York at Buffalo, *summa cum laude*.

Baruch stated, “Offering legal assistance to those in need goes beyond our professional duty—it reflects a commitment to fostering a more equitable society. I love being able to use my legal skills for social good, and to make a positive impact on the lives of those who cannot afford legal services. I’m so grateful to be working at a firm that supports associates in their pro bono work and contributes to justice and fairness in society. Our pro bono clients may not be able to successfully navigate the complex legal scenarios they’ve found themselves in without the help of Sheppard Mullin’s elite pro bono team, and I am honored to be a part of that team.”

Zachary Golda, an associate in the Business Trial Group in the Orange County office, is being recognized for his leadership on a litigation team on behalf of the Mental Health Association of Orange County (“MHA”). MHA is a non-profit that operates a mental health services center addressing needs for persons who are unhoused as a result of a severe mental disability or substance abuse disorder. Golda is one of the primary attorneys defending MHA in partnership with the Public Law Center (PLC) against proceedings brought by the City of Santa Ana claiming that MHA’s center is a public nuisance. Since 2020, Golda has handled the defense of the MHA matter, guiding the case through discovery, and acting as first-chair at the bench trial that has already spanned several months covering dozens of witnesses. Golda also oversees the firm’s participation in the PLC’s monthly clinic to assist pro se litigants. As a result of Golda’s leadership, the clinic has been fully staffed all year long, and PLC has called Sheppard Mullin’s Orange County office its “A team” for its outstanding commitment to pro bono. Golda received his J.D. from Loyola Law School, *Order of the Coif*, and his B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Golda stated, “The pro bono work I have done this year has been rewarding beyond measure. Taking on a pro bono matter has given me opportunities that I could only dream of having this early in my career. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to engage in such noble work at Sheppard Mullin.”

Chris Lawrence, an associate in the Business Trial Group in the Orange County office, demonstrated an exceptional dedication to pro bono this past year. Lawrence appeared as first-chair at trial defending a Vietnam Veteran from a claim by someone who wrongfully obtained a power of attorney and attempted to take over control of the client’s finances. After a full day of trial, Chris obtained a favorable settlement for his client. Chris is also an active member of the firm’s litigation team defending the MHA at trial against the City of Santa Ana’s eviction attempt, conducting direct and cross-examinations of several witnesses, and presenting arguments. Lawrence also assisted three families to adopt four children between the ages of 1 and 10 years old, and is also a regular volunteer at the Public Law Center’s Santa Ana pro se clinic. Lawrence also successfully represented a Gulf War veteran in obtaining a discharge upgrade after this US Navy Veteran was forced to retire when his hand was severely mangled in a shipboard accident. Lawrence received his J.D. from the University of California, Irvine School of Law in 2021, *magna cum laude*, and *with Pro Bono High Honors*, where he was Staff Editor of the *UC Irvine Law Review*, and Staff Editor of the *UC Irvine Journal of International, Transnational, and Comparative Law*. Lawrence received a B.S. from Arizona State University, *summa cum laude*, in 2015.

Lawrence stated, “I am convinced that we attorneys have an obligation to work to change our communities for the better. Our unique education grants us tremendous power to create that change. At UC Irvine Law, I experienced firsthand the positive impact that attorneys, through their pro bono work, can have on the community. I am grateful that I can continue giving back to the community as a practicing attorney in large part because Sheppard Mullin supports and encourages its attorneys to take on impactful pro bono work.”

Kayla Malone, an associate in the Labor and Employment Group in the San Francisco office, is being recognized this year in connection with more than 400 hours of pro bono work on several different matters. Throughout the year, Malone’s clients have expressed high praise for her work, an appreciation for her attention to detail and her guidance on their legal issues. Malone worked on a project to protect employees from workplace violence via a civil restraining order, playing a central role on the legal team at hearings and preparing and ultimately drafting the resolution agreement. Malone also worked on the successful consolidation of a large class action into a mediation for a nonprofit housing services organization. Malone and a team of attorneys also obtained asylum for a woman from Afghanistan persecuted by the Taliban because of her work with women’s rights organizations. Kayla sensitively engaged with and supported this traumatized client through the asylum process, and the client is now safely settled in Michigan with her two sisters. Malone received her J.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, with *Moot Court Honors*; an M.A. from the University of Florida, *with distinction*; and a B.A. from the University of Florida, *cum laude*.

Malone stated, “My pro bono work this year gifted me compassion, perspective and responsibility as a junior attorney. I am lucky to work at Sheppard Mullin, where we walk-the-walk when it comes to supporting pro bono and empowering associates to pursue legal work they deeply believe in. Our clients are deeply appreciative of our leadership in navigating complex legal systems, and defending pro bono clients in litigation allows us to support the fair and just use of the judicial system and protect nonprofit’s limited resources for direct services to those in need.”

“Keren, Zach, Chris and Kayla exemplify Sheppard Mullin’s commitment to pro bono and the communities in which we work and live. They represent the best of our profession,” said Dan Brown, Sheppard Mullin’s Pro Bono Partner.

Sheppard Mullin's Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award is the firm's highest pro bono honor, recognizing and rewarding the important pro bono work done by Sheppard Mullin attorneys. The award is named in honor and memory of Bob Gerber, the founder of Sheppard Mullin's pro bono program and its leader for more than a decade.

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Attorneys

Keren Baruch

Daniel L. Brown

Chris Lawrence

Practice Areas

Corporate

Labor and Employment

Litigation