

Advocates for Human Rights

Fredrikson lawyers helped found what is now known as the Advocates for Human Rights (AHR) more than 25 years ago. The organization's mission, while it has expanded tremendously over this time, has remained true to its roots – to promote and protect human rights. AHR does this through research, education, and advocacy. We have a long history of partnering with the AHR on many issues, including asylum cases.

Jennifer Pusch in the Tax Litigation department and legal administrative assistant Marvic Salminen-Morillo, assisted M. in her quest for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) after she fled her home in a very poor, rural part of Guatemala for safety reasons. M.'s parents abandoned her as a child, and she was forced to live with an abusive family member in a region of Guatemala overwhelmed with gang violence and corruption. Scared for her future, she fled and traveled to the United States alone when she was only 16 years old. Imagine traveling through Mexico completely alone at that age. After crossing the U.S. border, she was picked up by Border Patrol in Arizona. She spent four long months in an immigration center for women and children and was eventually released to her cousin's custody in Minnesota. After Border Patrol detained M., the government immediately started removal proceedings in Immigration Court. However, because M. was an unaccompanied minor, she could apply for both asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Over the last year, with her team's assistance, M. has appeared in Immigration Court, Hennepin County Family Court, prepared and filed an asylum application, and prepared and filed a petition for SIJS. She did all of this while attending high school and learning English. M.'s SIJS was granted, which allows her to apply for residency in the United States. Though she is on a waiting list and needs to wait until her priority date comes up, she now has a legal basis to remain in this country permanently. She currently lives with a loving family and is learning English at a very rapid rate. Most importantly, she is safe and well-cared for.

"This work is important to me because in addition to providing needed legal representation, representing M. made me feel like I was doing something, albeit small, to help the huddled masses at the border." – Jennifer Pusch

Children's Law Center

Fredrikson lawyers have worked with Children's Law Center (CLC) for many years, representing children in foster care in administrative and legal hearings. While the primary goal of the program is to allow children a voice in decisions relating to their placement or life situation, a secondary, but often equally important outcome, is for the child to experience a relationship of trust with an adult – something that is

oftentimes missing in the lives of children in foster care.

Economic Development

Fredrikson has a unique relationship with many economic development nonprofits, such as Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) and the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON). These organizations work to help low-income and emerging entrepreneurs develop successful businesses that revitalize and grow their communities. NDC trains entrepreneurs on how to effectively start a new business, how to write a business plan and where to get financing, among other topics. NEON has similar programming for entrepreneurs including mentorship, business incubation and development, training, and workshops. Fredrikson offers legal assistance to the graduates of NDC's business training program and to NEON's entrepreneurs. An example of the success of NDC's program can be found by driving along East Lake Street in South Minneapolis. NDC partnered with other nonprofits to open the Mercado Central in 2000 and the Midtown Global Market in 2006. The growth that these two projects initiated can be seen all up and down the street. Fredrikson & Byron lawyers have helped many of these entrepreneurs with legal issues ranging from choice of entity, entity formation, lease negotiations and reviews, drafting of contracts, and more.

Immigrant Law Center

The mission of the Immigrant Law Center (ILC) is to provide quality immigration legal services and law-related education to meet the steadily increasing needs of Minnesota's growing immigrant and refugee communities. They do this through advocacy, education and direct representation.

Volunteer Lawyers Network

The Volunteer Lawyers Network's (VLN) mission is to promote access to justice and the administration of justice by providing legal services to low-income people, primarily in Hennepin County, by building and maintaining a network of volunteer lawyers. VLN provides volunteers to assist in the areas of administrative, bankruptcy, and civil law; debtor/creditor, employment and real estate issues; criminal expungements and family law matters; and unemployment compensation.