Protecting Democracy, Accountability, and Freedom of Expression Nationwide

Stories of Impact from the Legal Clinic Fund
A National Crisis

Telling the truth. Accessing information. Expressing ideas.

These are among the pillars of democracy. But across the United States, those pillars are cracking. And vulnerable people are paying a high price. What does it take to expose police brutality, or to chronicle the depth of the opioid crisis? How can we combat misinformation about vaccines, or uncover stories of child abuse? Journalists and new nonprofit newsrooms are amplifying voices in their communities, and striving to hold local leaders accountable for their actions. But today, journalists lack the kind of legal support that has historically helped them do their jobs. In 2016, the Knight Foundation published research that revealed a major problem: A majority of news editors from across the United States felt that the news industry as a whole was increasingly ill-equipped to provide legal support related to freedom of expression and First Amendment rights.

New threats are undermining freedom of information, access, and accountability and chipping away at First Amendment rights that help our society thrive. This is not just dangerous for the press. It’s dangerous for all of us.

That’s why a group of funders came together to launch the Legal Clinic Fund — an effort to support legal clinics at universities that are helping to meet the needs of local journalists nationwide in an increasingly fragile landscape.
A Bold Response

Founded in 2019, the Legal Clinic Fund serves as a catalyst to expand legal support for local newsrooms and journalists in communities that rely on truthful news and accountability in reporting. Housed at universities and law schools around the country, each clinic provides free services dedicated to advancing and defending First Amendment rights, media freedom, and transparency.

4 funding partners ➤ $3.5 million in grants

9 legal clinics in the U.S. and Puerto Rico

5 Core Grantmaking Themes

- **Helping journalists expose injustice**, such as police brutality and misconduct — and supporting journalism that holds people accountable for their actions.
- **Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion** by amplifying underrepresented voices.
- **Safeguarding laws** that uphold access to information, such as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- **Expanding freedom of expression** through documentary films and other visual journalism projects.
- **Combating misinformation and libel** through strategic litigation efforts.
Enclosed in these pages are stories of how the Fund’s first two cohorts of legal clinics are supporting local journalists and making an enduring impact on the landscape of First Amendment rights nationwide.

When news reporters in Maine suspected that records of misconduct among Maine State Troopers had been swept under the rug, the **Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic at Yale Law School** helped two local journalists uncover the truth.

When a blogger’s career was nearly destroyed by a multi-million dollar construction company that sought to silence him, the **First Amendment Clinic at Cornell Law School** helped the blogger get the case thrown out.

When a young reporter and photographer for a newspaper in California had his cell phone confiscated at a protest following the shooting of a Black man, the **Intellectual Property, Arts, and Technology Clinic of UC Irvine School of Law** championed an effort to get the reporter’s phone promptly returned.

When a filmmaker sought to make a documentary that examines the culture of sexual abuse and cover-ups in the Boy Scouts of America, the **Cardozo Law School’s Center for Visual Advocacy** provided legal support to help the filmmaker complete the film.

When a Buffalo police union sued to block police misconduct records from release to the public under a freedom of information law, the **Civil Rights and Transparency Clinic at the University at Buffalo School of Law** represented dozens of media organizations, including the *New York Times*, *Investigative Post*, and Associated Press, to argue the importance of the public’s right to know.
In 2020, two reporters for local papers in Maine, The Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald, were investigating a story about Maine’s State Police. They had requested access to trooper discipline records, but were puzzled by what they saw: sections of the records were missing, inconsistent, or composed in a way that felt intentionally misleading. Usually, journalists gain clarity after accessing public records but, in this case, the records invited suspicion: What might the state police be concealing? Was Maine’s police department allowing State Troopers to abuse their power?

Small news organizations like The Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald tend to have small budgets and no legal team to guide investigative efforts. That’s why the Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic at Yale Law School is vital. Colloquially known as “MFIA,” the clinic is committed to supporting the legal needs of small local and regional news organizations. That support could be as simple as crafting a strongly-worded letter on these organizations’ behalf to fend off baseless legal claims, or as critical as helping journalists get access to government documents. With the help of MFIA, The Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald were able to sue the Maine State Police over inappropriately redacted records of how the state handles trooper misconduct: drunk driving, sexual harassment, and much more.

David Schulz, who co-teaches at MFIA, says that the clinic has never had trouble filling its caseload. But many journalists continue to shy away from rigorous investigative work because they feel ill-equipped with legal expertise, or simply don’t have the time or money to do what is necessary. That’s why MFIA is eager to scale up its services.

In addition to providing hands-on legal support and representation, MFIA also recently launched an outreach initiative to train local journalists about the Freedom of Information Act — a federal law that requires the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States government upon request. The clinic is hoping to soon expand its ability to offer pre-publication review, a service that is often requested but difficult for law students to provide.

MFIA understands the critical role that journalists can play in exposing injustice and working for a better, safer, and more peaceful world. And investing in legal support to help journalists do the heavy-lifting is needed now more than ever before.
The Initiative for a Representative First Amendment

www.ifrfa.org

When people think about the First Amendment and media expression, defending the rights of incarcerated people posting on TikTok may not be top of mind. But for Fellows at The Initiative for a Representative First Amendment (IfRFA), a project of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and the Harvard Law School Cyberlaw Clinic, the question is critical to our understanding of First Amendment law. Iltaff Bala, an IfRFA Fellow wrote, “It can seem like the question of whether prisoners should have access to social media is easy to answer. If social media is accessed through a contraband cell phone, prisons are well within their rights to disallow access. But there’s much more to it than that.”

More than two million people in the U.S. are incarcerated and the majority of people in prisons are Black, Brown, and Hispanic. During the COVID pandemic, many incarcerated people have used contraband cell phones to post videos on TikTok about alarming prison conditions: not enough soap to wash their hands, abusive behaviors of prison guards, and much more. Several state prison systems have attempted to ban social media for people in prison and sometimes even for families using social media on an incarcerated person’s behalf. Historically, the lives of incarcerated people have been hidden from the public eye. But the landscape of media rights and expression is rapidly changing, and IfRFA Fellows are stepping up — especially for communities on the margins.

IfRFA’s mission is to provide financial support and career opportunities to law students that are traditionally underrepresented in First Amendment law: students of color, queer and trans students, and students with disabilities. Through a rigorous fellowship program, a generous stipend, and access to a tight-knit community of supportive peers and facilitators, IfRFA empowers law students with diverse identities to learn more about the broader implications of freedom of speech, expression and assembly, and get hands-on experience to consider how those issues might apply to their own lives and legal practice.

Kendra Albert, the director of IfRFA and an instructor at Harvard’s Cyberlaw Clinic, explains that First Amendment law has been largely siloed and disconnected from other areas of law. IfRFA tries to break down that barrier by asserting that First Amendment law is for everyone. To date, there are no First Amendment legal clinics in the U.S. led by women of color — and only a handful of attorneys of color employed by First Amendment rights clinics. IfRFA prioritizes funding students who are at the intersection of multiple axes of marginalization, and students who may find it difficult to obtain summer public interest funding without additional support.
In 2020 and 2021, during the height of a national reckoning with racism and sexism, IfRFA focused on developing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) trainings at legal clinics across the United States to pave the way for more inclusive and welcoming legal environments. Many IfRFA Fellows regularly encounter racist and sexist feedback in their law clinics, which are often dominated by white men.

**IfRFA strives to model the world as it should be by fostering a community of caring, paying everyone fairly for their work, and ensuring that the field of law practitioners reflects the multi-racial reality of life today.**

With deeper investments in IfRFA’s work, Fellows will continue to diversify the field of law, and advance media expression and First Amendment rights to build a better world for all of us.
Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion

Civil Rights & Transparency Clinic at the University at Buffalo School of Law

law.buffalo.edu/beyond/clinics/civil-rights

Elias Fox Schmidt, a student at the University at Buffalo School of Law, translates the skills he’s building in the Civil Rights & Transparency Clinic into lasting impact. A lifelong Buffalo native, Elias cares deeply about his home community. One of the most prominent issues plaguing the area is the poor conditions in the Erie County Jails. The jail system is one of the worst in the state — particularly for people at risk of suicide or sexual assault. Elias is leading the charge to obtain records from the Sheriff’s Office through litigation and community-building to pressure the Sheriff to report suicides and sexual assaults and develop new practices to prevent the needless deaths of people in custody.

Nick Ramirez, a West Side Buffalo native, has used his clinic experience to develop his oral advocacy. In 2020, as a 2L law student, he argued before a state appellate court, defending the public’s right to access jail records. Recently, he applied those skills in the Law School’s appellate advocacy competition, making it to the prestigious finals and earning second place overall. These experiences also inspired Nick to develop a post-graduate public interest fellowship proposal that seeks to narrow the applicability of qualified immunity in police abuse cases. Nick is poised to be a social justice leader in the future.

Elias and Nick are just two of the student attorneys at the Civil Rights & Transparency Clinic who are shaping the future in bold and far-reaching ways.

The clinic’s focus is to advance civil rights and civil liberties, spanning constitutional liberties like free speech, privacy, due process, and statutory civil rights against discrimination. By offering a rich mix of service and learning opportunities, the clinic strives to harness the power of students who are advancing civil rights nationwide.

The clinic recently trained journalists and student journalists on New York’s Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) in an event co-hosted by the Buffalo Association of Black Journalists. Transparency and government accountability are important clinic values, and the clinic believes it is essential to empower individuals and organizations with the use of the public records law to promote public accountability.

Located in a smaller city, the clinic has been able to make a bigger impact through changing norms and setting new standards. Today, local government institutions and school districts know that if they withhold information from journalists who have a right to access records, the Civil Rights & Transparency Clinic won’t hesitate to hold them accountable.
Additionally, the clinic makes a strong and tangible impact on the local community in western parts of New York State that face police misconduct, corruption in local schools, suicides in jails, housing discrimination, and other matters that require legal accountability. Located in a smaller city, the clinic has been able to make a bigger impact through changing norms and setting new standards. Today, local government institutions and school districts know that if they withhold information from journalists who have a right to access records, the Civil Rights & Transparency Clinic won’t hesitate to hold them accountable.
Access to Information Clinic at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico

On May 1, 2018, media footage from a general worker strike in front of Puerto Rico’s capital building showed police in riot gear firing tear gas and pepper spray in the faces of protestors. The violent scene was reminiscent of similar protests the previous year at the same location, when police yielding large black batons had clashed with citizens demonstrating for International Workers Day. That day, too, had ended in a fog of pepper spray and smoke bombs — while viewers around the world watched the chaos unfold on live TV.

But neither of these incidents appeared in any of the official use-of-force reports the Puerto Rico Police Department finally disclosed to state watchdog Kilómetro Cero in 2018. The group made multiple requests for a series of documents that had been illegally withheld from the public for years. Also strangely, even chillingly, absent from this set of documents — which should have included a full list of mortalities from 2014 to 2018 — were the names of dozens of women who news agencies had reported as murdered or missing. In a report published in partnership with local feminist organization Proyecto Matria, Kilómetro Cero alleged that Puerto Rico’s police bureau had undercounted murders of women by 11 to 27 percent each year during a four-year period.

It wasn’t only the obvious gaps in the reports that Kilómetro Cero found troubling; the documents were heavily redacted. Though these documents were supposed to be public information, in practice, the reports were useless.

With the help of the Access to Information Clinic at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Law School, Kilómetro Cero filed a lawsuit — a feat that a small, underfunded group like Kilómetro Cero could never have accomplished alone. On May 28, 2021, the Puerto Rico Supreme Court publicly issued an opinion in their favor. The court held that use-of-force reports are non-confidential public records, and ordered their full and complete release.

Kilómetro Cero and other human rights advocates are hopeful that the lawsuit will herald a new era of police accountability in Puerto Rico. The team of law students and supervising lawyers at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico’s Access to Information Clinic shares that hope.
In fact, their vision is even more ambitious: they work tirelessly every day toward a free and fair Puerto Rico where all government agencies are accountable to the people.

In addition to helping Kilómetro Cero, in 2021, the clinic also filed nine other access to information lawsuits on behalf of local nonprofits and media groups. That’s nearly double the number of cases they were able to take on in 2019 — and it’s largely thanks to The Legal Clinic Fund, whose support allowed the clinic to hire a full-time staff member. Now that there is someone whose key focus is expanding the clinic’s capacity and reaching out to the community, new cases are pouring in.

On top of their existing legal caseload, the clinic staff and students are also striving to get the word out to local journalists, public interest groups, and NGOs who might not know about the clinic’s services. In an effort to maximize impact, they’ve also led workshops and trainings to teach journalists how to file requests for accessing information and understanding basic legal legwork to get closer to the truth.

The clinic’s biggest challenge? Letting local community members know they serve more than just reporters. “We represent everyone,” says Luis José Torres-Asencio, the clinic’s co-director. “We’re hoping that once the pandemic is over, returning to in-person work will help us engage a whole new population.”
The death of a child is unspeakably tragic, and it is especially unsettling when a child dies under the watch of the state — failed, in the most horrific way possible, by a system that is supposed to keep children safe.

Though the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was designed to intervene when children are in unsafe situations, a staggering 21 children who were already on the agency’s radar died in 2014 as a result of abuse or neglect by a parent or caregiver. When eight-year-old Gabriel Fernandez of Palmdale, California became part of that gruesome statistic, local freelance reporter Garrett Therolf wanted to know why. What happened to this sweet young boy, and how did he slip through the cracks?

Because the state of California keeps family court records and juvenile information sealed, the answer was not immediately clear. Fortunately, the UCI Intellectual Property, Arts, and Technology Clinic of UC Irvine School of Law stepped up to the challenge. Local UCI law students supervised by experienced attorneys teamed up with Therolf to get the records unsealed — a process that Therolf had managed himself for years but was now seeing his paperwork tossed by a new judge.

Getting the clinic's help turned out to be a watershed moment. Once Therolf had access to the records, he was able to discover the truth — that Gabriel showed up to school bloody and bruised on multiple occasions, with patches of hair missing and scabs on his scalp; that his teacher had reported her concerns, and state social workers had visited his home multiple times. And that still, somehow, the child welfare services agency had failed to remove the boy from danger before his mother and her boyfriend allegedly beat and tortured him to death.

Therolf's unraveling of this unthinkable tragedy became a national news story and eventually a Netflix docu-series. Unfortunately, child welfare services workers are still failing to move decisively, and chronically abused children are still being killed under their watch. The clinic and Therolf are working together on a new exposé based on new court records unsealed by the clinic.

With a focus on protecting civil liberties and supporting innovation in the digital age, the UCI clinic takes on many cases like Therolf’s each year. In an era where newsrooms are more thinly staffed and under-resourced than ever, and laws about digital media can’t keep up with constantly advancing technology, the clinic provides critical services to ensure that journalists, nonprofits, filmmakers, and artists have the tools they need to expose the truth, tell important stories like Gabriel's, and keep lawmakers accountable.
journalists, nonprofits, filmmakers, and artists have the tools they need to expose the truth, tell important stories like Gabriel’s, and keep lawmakers accountable. Additionally, the clinic’s law students advise and represent clients on matters including First Amendment liberties, copyright issues, privacy, media law, and more — gaining important legal skills while filling a crucial community gap. Law students advise and represent clients on matters including First Amendment liberties, copyright issues, privacy, media law, and more — gaining important legal skills while filling a crucial community gap.

Their tireless efforts are already paying dividends. In 2016, the clinic won a California Lawyer Attorney of the Year award for its work helping authors and documentary filmmakers win the right to break encryption on DVDs and Blu-ray so they can use snippets of those movies for criticism and commentary — a common and essential practice for independent filmmakers. Their support not only helped specific artists, but led to changes in the rules from the Library of Congress. That case represents the second part of what the clinic considers its twofold strategy: while much of their work is in seeking justice from the “outside” via cases like Gabriel’s, they also strive to effect change from the “inside out” via advocating for policy changes that create a more open government for all.

With the Legal Clinic Fund’s support, clinic leaders hope to continue to expand these efforts, building coalitions with lawmakers and government agencies and taking on increasingly ambitious cases — like suing local governments for patterns of illegally withholding records from reporters, or working to stop judges from routinely issuing overly broad gag orders.

Given the clinic’s track record so far, that likely means more lives will be saved and more perpetrators will be brought to justice.
Filmmakers Legal Clinic at the Center for Visual Advocacy at Cardozo Law School

cardo.yu.edu/CVA

It started as a straightforward legal clinic for filmmakers. Now, it’s a vital program that uses visual advocacy to move the needle on social justice issues. The Center for Visual Advocacy (CVA) at Cardozo School of Law supports photojournalists, documentary filmmakers, and independent narrative filmmakers who often need — but can’t afford — critical legal assistance to bring their stories to light.

With visual media nearly ubiquitous and calls for social justice reverberating loudly across the nation, the CVA strives to amplify under-told stories by empowering the filmmakers who tell them.

“Today, anyone can film a protest on their phone,” said Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin who directs the Center. “But if a person wants to use footage for a film they’re creating, the legal hurdles are nearly insurmountable for someone who can’t afford legal representation.”

Filmmakers not only have to worry about First Amendment issues, but they also have to navigate the minefield of copyright law in a world of endless images. Beyond that, filmmakers need to raise funds and negotiate detailed agreements with investors, film crews, or people appearing in a film. Questions of releases, licenses, and permission require a broad range of legal knowledge. With these challenges, creating a legal entity as a production company becomes even more crucial. The Filmmakers Legal Clinic does not want important stories to get lost in the quagmire of legal intricacies. That’s why the clinic aims to bring down the legal costs of filmmaking so that the door can be swung wide open for many stories to make their way to the screen.

For example, three recent films — one about sexual abuse in Boy Scouts of America, another that chronicles three American athletes during their time competing in the Special Olympics, and a third about a six-year-old trans girl fighting for her rights in Texas — would not have been possible without the clinic’s ability to provide legal support for the filmmakers.

“When culture changes, the law follows culture, not the other way around.”

“Print journalism is important, but people are moved by what they see more than what they read,” she says. “When culture changes, the law follows culture, not the other way around.”
Granting access to public records is an essential part of advancing First Amendment rights — but there’s much more. Arcola Whatley of the Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center at Case Western Reserve University knows this well. She strives to teach the First Amendment under the umbrella of social advocacy.

At the heart of her work is a core question: “How have we used First Amendment laws to advance human rights and civil rights in the United States?”

For instance, when the streets lit up in protests in the summer of 2020, much of the news coverage centered on public safety, but Whatley believes it was a missed opportunity to help the public see the ways in which the First Amendment is intricately woven into the fabric of our society. “People don’t understand what free speech really is,” says Whatley. “Especially in the digital age with social media, and our previous administration’s stance on social media. People are confused. And I think that’s a lot of what we see in the public discourse now.”

When the framers of the constitution were thinking about free speech, they were imagining people standing on a street corner having the right to say what they wanted to say, or to print what they wanted to print. But the landscape of the 21st-century is radically more complex. Which types of speech are protected, and how does digital technology complicate protections? Should social media forums be open and free? What are the boundaries and implications for speaking or writing on social media forums that permit anonymity? In Whatley’s First Amendment practicum, second- and third-year law students at Case Western dig into these questions firsthand, while working on broader projects at the nexus of social change and freedom of expression.

In 2020 and 2021, students worked on a national initiative to figure out how many incarcerated people die in state custody and to investigate the conditions that might have led to those deaths. Often, the deaths of people in prison relate to conditions that could have been avoided if incarcerated people’s rights to speech and expression weren’t being quashed. Students also represent journalists, researchers, and other interested parties enforcing the public’s constitutional and statutory rights of access to government records and proceedings in order to support a more informed citizenry. For example, during the height of the COVID crisis,
students developed a social media infographic about access to local public meetings in Cleveland at a time when accessing in-person meetings was significantly limited.

“Journalists act as the fourth estate, the fourth check on the checks and balances on the government,” Whatley says. “Access is a big issue. Journalists have to request everything — and sometimes they have to fight.”

When they do need to fight, Whatley and her students will be there. For now, they are working on building relationships with local community groups and broadening their pool of possible clients. “I want a steady stream of clients coming to us,” says Whatley. “And not just journalists. I want individual citizens, social interest groups. We want a diverse clientele.”
Combating misinformation and libel

Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic
lawschool.cornell.edu/first-amendment-clinic

When Mark Jackson worked as General Counsel of Dow Jones & Co., he and his team of lawyers had ongoing relationships with Wall Street Journal reporters. The paper’s journalists knew that Jackson’s legal department would help them get their stories published, and if any legal claims arose, the legal department would have their backs.

Today, as the Director of the Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic, Jackson is devoting this next stage of his career to helping Cornell law students and the clinic faculty play that role for independent local media outlets that might not otherwise be able to pursue investigative stories or afford counsel when they find themselves in legal jeopardy. “We want to represent underrepresented communities and help those outlets get more of a voice,” he says.

The primary focus of the clinic’s Local Journalism Project is to aid these underserved media organizations in the newsgathering process to allow them to pursue stories of import to their readership and to defend those outlets against attempts to suppress their protected speech.

Recently, the clinic has seen an uptick in libel cases. “People are misusing libel laws these days to suppress speech,” Jackson says. “And when it happens on the local level, it is even more pernicious — because it could send a local journalist out of business.”

That’s exactly what almost happened to Jim Meaney, who runs The Geneva Believer, a blog that focuses on city government in Geneva, New York. In February 2020, Meaney received a cease and desist letter accusing him of defaming a construction company, Massa Construction, which had received millions of dollars of construction contracts from the City of Geneva. The letter demanded that Meaney remove all 17 stories it had previously published about Massa. The blog had raised several questions regarding these contracts, including whether there were conflicts of interest among City Council members, including one who was a Massa employee. Upon receiving the cease and desist letter, Meaney reached out to the Cornell clinic for help. The clinic, along with co-counsel Michael Grygiel of Greenberg Traurig, successfully defended that suit, getting the case dismissed under New York’s anti-SLAPP statute, and obtaining attorney’s fees for Meaney.

“People are misusing libel laws these days to suppress speech,” Jackson says. “And when it happens on the local level, it is even more pernicious — because it could send a local journalist out of business.”
In addition to defending libel lawsuits, the clinic helps its clients get documents in aid of their reporting and pursues litigations when the government improperly refuses to comply with their requests. It has also fought for access to sealed documents and court proceedings. There is no shortage of matters to take on. “Even if there were 100 First Amendment clinics in the U.S., there would still be more work to do than the clinics could accommodate,” says Heather Murray, the Local Journalism Project Managing Attorney.

The clinic has won and is fighting several lawsuits on behalf of media outlets in its own backyard, including in New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont — as well on behalf of clients on the border of the United States and Mexico that are covering essential stories related to immigration.
The team at the First Amendment Clinic at The University of Virginia Law School — where law students learn to fight for clients’ civil liberties with supervision from lawyers at the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press — is always busy. In just two years, they’ve managed to build a consistently full docket, hire a fellow, conduct student-led workshops and trainings for local journalists, and play a key role in expanding media access in the region.

With a focus on representing those who seek access to government information or are facing defamation charges, the key work now is to make sure local reporters and non-governmental agencies know that the clinic is there to support them — and to sift through various community needs to stay laser-focused on its mission.

The clinic has assisted journalists with numerous state and federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and filed a suit against the Department of Justice to seek records relating to deferred and non-prosecution agreements with various corporate defendants. The clinic represents UVA Law librarian Jon Ashley who developed the Federal Organizational Prosecution Agreements database, an important repository of prosecution agreements that is freely available to researchers.

In addition to its public records work, the clinic has had success representing members of its local community faced with expensive defamation suits. Recently, two young defendants were unjustly sued for millions of dollars after sharing and commenting on a viral social media post. With the clinic’s help, the case was dismissed. While the clinic was able to step in and provide pro-bono representation, it knows there are many others who need legal support.

“We’ve definitely had to turn away requests,” says faculty member Gabe Rottman. With new and emerging obstacles in the field of First Amendment rights, the clinic anticipates an uptick in its caseload. But hopefully, with an increase in funding, the clinic will be able to protect the civil liberties of more people for months and years to come.
Five Ways to Help Protect Freedom of the Press

1. **Fund legal support and representation**
   for journalists and news organizations that are sharing vital information.

2. **Contribute to your local news organization, a national news outlet, a nonprofit newsroom, or a public radio station**
   to directly support quality journalism in your community.

3. **Demand and applaud government transparency**
   by urging local leaders to operate with transparency, honesty, and accessibility for the public and the press.

4. **Advocate for legislation**
   that protects press freedom and the First Amendment at both the state and federal levels.

5. **Ensure the rights and safety of all journalists,**
   particularly journalists and newsrooms led by and for BIPOC communities and other marginalized groups that often experience structural barriers and receive limited support for their work.

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**Paving the Way for a Just Future**

The Legal Clinic Fund seeks to ensure that any newsroom or journalist that needs legal support can access it. The work being led by our grantees is critically important to advancing and defending First Amendment rights, media freedom, and transparency in the U.S. Providing newsrooms and journalists with increased legal resources and representation is an issue of equity. But the needs are far greater than the financial resources currently available. And we cannot do this work alone. We invite interested partners to learn more about the Legal Clinic Fund and explore how you can support this important work.

For more information, contact LLinzer@miamifoundation.org.
All photos were provided by member clinics of the Legal Clinic Fund.