



# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

Public Interest Law Center



2023 was a year of significant student accomplishments. Elder Law Clinic students succeeded legislatively to repeal the sales tax on incontinence products, impacting more than 2.5 million consumers! Children in Prison Project students drafted bills restricting solitary confinement, resulting in the bills being filed this session. Farmworker and Immigration Rights Clinic students conducted outreach activities in Leon and Gadsden counties, educating poor communities on immigration and migrant worker rights. International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic students published an international report on sedition laws in Africa, engaging the international dialogue on human rights. The clinics represented about 200 individual clients. More details follow below.

Thank you,  
Professor Paolo Annino  
Director of the FSU College of Law Public Interest Law Center

## Children's Advocacy Clinic

**Children's Advocacy Clinic** students were stellar in 2023! Under the direction of Professors **Paolo Annino** and **Emmalyn Dalton**, students provided direct legal representation in 70 cases. They represented three groups: children who were sex and labor trafficked, children with severe disabilities, and young children (ages 0-5). Clinic students advocated in approximately 90 court and administrative hearings. In addition to direct representation



of individual clients, clinic students went to a local runaway shelter and provided the children with pizza and informal talks on knowing your rights. The runaway shelter is one of our main sources of referrals for human trafficking clients. Third-year law student Ashley Marceus (pictured) commented, "it has

been both an honor and a pleasure to participate in the Children's Advocacy Clinic! In mere months, I helped to change the life of a human trafficking victim and learned crucial litigation skills!"

## International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic

The International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic, directed by Professor Darby Kerrigan Scott, published a policy brief in collaboration with the Southern Africa Litigation Centre. Clinic student and research assistant Nicholas Lower (pictured) led the research and writing for the project, which focused on the offense of sedition in Africa. The policy brief addresses historical use of the offense of sedition on the continent and its impact on the rule of law and international standards, recommending that “[a]dvocacy and lobbying are needed at every level of government to turn the tide against the criminalization of expression, including the offence of sedition.” Reflecting on his experience, Lower said, “It was a great opportunity to advance my perception of human rights both internationally and domestically on a practical and timely issue.”



## Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic



*Students Sara Clark and Veronica Hernandez speak in support of HB 29/SB 114 before the Florida Senate Community Affairs Committee.*

During the 2023 Florida Legislative Session, students in the **Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic**, directed by **Professor Rima Nathan**, worked closely with State Representative Anna V. Eskamani to pass Florida HB 29/SB 114, a permanent sales tax exemption for diapers and incontinence products. The clinic hosted a symposium at the FSU College of Law to discuss the progress of the bill with Representative Eskamani, AARP Florida Director of Advocacy Zayne Smith, and Elder Care Services, Inc., which was broadcast on WFSU radio. Students also testified in both Florida House and Florida Senate committees in support of the bill. We are pleased to report that this bipartisan legislation passed, and people in Florida no longer have to pay sales tax on these important products! This new law will help an estimated 2.5 million older Floridians who use incontinence products daily. Third-year law student Veronica Hernandez commented, “the FSU Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic was an incredible experience. It provided me holistic insight into the legislative process by working and testifying on a real bill and gave me hands-on experience drafting estate documents.”

## Farmworker & Immigration Rights Clinic



*Students Brittney Downing, Vivekkah Suppiah, and Juan Gonzalez Moreno, joined by a student volunteer with Legal Services of North Florida and Professor Nyborg Burch, at a community resource fair in Quincy, Florida.*

Student attorneys with the [Farmworker & Immigration Rights Clinic](#) (FIRC), directed by [Professor Erika Nyborg-Burch](#), helped immigrant community members pursue affirmative benefits and humanitarian relief. Students worked with survivors of trafficking seeking to reunite with their families, families seeking asylum, and unaccompanied minors settling with family, among others. Clinic students brought their legal skills into the community, with a presentation in Tallahassee for asylum-seekers and know-your-rights trainings for immigrants at a community event in Quincy. Additional FSU Law students gave their time pro bono to assist with these projects. Second-year law student Christen Asiedu reflected that participating in the clinic “was an incredible opportunity that allowed me to help clients navigate the immigration process to reunite with their families. I was able to develop advocacy and other essential skills useful for a future law career.” FIRC is excited to embark on a new partnership this spring with Justice in Motion to help in defending migrant workers from labor exploitation.

## Health Care Access Project: The Children Can Return Home

Victory! For 12 years, Health Care Access students advocated against forcing medically fragile children to reside in nursing facilities. In 2012, the [Health Care Access Project](#), directed by [Professor Paolo Annino](#), with two nonprofits, filed a federal class action against Florida for violating the children’s ADA and Medicaid rights. In 2023, there were 140 children in nursing facilities and 1,800 at risk of entering nursing facilities. Building upon the students’ advocacy, the DOJ brought a lawsuit.



The trial court ruled in favor of children, who now have the opportunity to return home and receive community services. Many thanks to former students Caitlyn Clibbon, Carolyn Devita, Nico Kairies, Candace Rechtmann, Haley VanErem, Eric Schab, Madeline Brezin, and others for their stupendous advocacy.

## Juvenile Solitary Confinement Project

In the [Juvenile Solitary Confinement Project](#), directed by Professors [Paolo Annino](#) and [Emmalyn Dalton](#), clinic students

advocated to reduce placement of children and adults in solitary confinement. Fifty percent of children who take their own lives in prisons do so while in solitary confinement. Clinic students researched state, federal, and international law on solitary confinement and drafted two model bills for Florida. State Senator Powell filed both bills, and they are pending in this legislative session. Second-year law student Zoe Chaskel said, “the Solitary Confinement Project was an eye-opening and exceptional experience. It was a great opportunity to work on policy advocacy and the representation of a vulnerable population.” Pictured (L-R) are Chaskel and fellow student Christina Portuallo, while visiting a client at Lowell Correctional Institution.



## Racial Justice Fellowship Program

FSU College of Law, in collaboration with Florida’s 11 other law schools, formed the Florida Law Schools’ Consortium for Racial Justice (FLSCRJ) and FSU Law’s Racial Justice Fellowship. The FLSCRJ leverages the strengths of every law school in the state to research and educate our community about racial justice issues. The Racial Justice Fellowship selects two students per semester to work in connection with the FLSCRJ to pursue racial justice initiatives both locally and state-wide. Fellows have the opportunity to assist FLSCRJ’s partners with legal research, policy reform, and education efforts. This spring semester, fellows Tavaura Wardlow, 1L, and Britania Whyte, 2L, are organizing with their partners a statewide webinar on racial justice and free speech. Wardlow stated, “the Racial Justice Fellowship promotes a vital alliance between Florida law schools by advocating for social justice, policy reform, and advancing anti-racist initiatives. Together, the fellows work to increase racial equity within their schools, communities, and across the state.”



## Alternative Spring Break



*2023 Alternative Spring Break students with Farmworker Association of Florida representatives*

**Alternative Spring Break** 2023 was an incredible success! The program, directed by **Professor Darby Kerrigan Scott**, connected 13 passionate students with current and former farmworkers in Apopka, Florida. In collaboration with **The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.** and through the expertise of **Jeannie Economos**, students learned about issues farmworkers face—inadequate labor law protections, pesticide and heat exposure, and immigration—directly from farmworkers. Third-year student Ash Hoyt, coordinator of the 2023 trip, remarked, “past ASB participants approach me constantly to continue talking about their experiences and the lasting positive impact the program has had on them.”



***In memory of Candace Francine Rechtmann ('18),  
Children's Advocacy Clinic and Health Care  
Access Project. August 31, 1993 - January 25,  
2023.***

***“We miss her kind heart, her brilliant mind, and  
her legal advocacy for vulnerable children.”***

***- Prof. Annino***

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