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## Pro Bono Partnership Funded To Assist Westchester Nonprofit Child Care Centers

WHITE PLAINS, New York (January 15, 2009) – The Pro Bono Partnership, a nationally recognized provider of pro bono business legal assistance to nonprofit organizations, has announced a new initiative to provide enhanced free legal services for nonprofit child care centers. A grant from the Frog Rock Foundation has enabled the Partnership to assign attorney Leslie Kimball, in the Partnership's White Plains office, to serve as the point person for legal issues related to child care for centers located in Westchester County. "Young children need high quality early care environments in order to thrive," explained Libbie Naman Poppick, Executive Director of the Frog Rock Foundation.

"Providing child care centers with good legal and management assistance is one way to ensure that those high quality environments are available for families who need them."



l. to r.: Leslie Kimball, Senior Staff Attorney, and Maurice Segall, Director, New York and Fairfield County Program, Pro Bono Partnership, with Howard Milbert, Executive Director, Ossining Children's Center and Co-President of the Westchester Early Childhood Director's Association.

"The Partnership has been providing pro bono legal advice to child care centers and other Westchester nonprofits since 1997," said Rick Hobish, the Partnership's Executive Director. "This funding will enable us to bring considerable and substantial resources to focus on this area of our practice and provide greater access to legal advice for local centers. We foresee the Partnership becoming a source of first resort for legal and policy issues related to nonprofit child care providers in New York State."

The Partnership will work closely with the Child Care Council of Westchester and other nonprofit umbrella groups to reach

out to child care centers in need of legal assistance and, also, provide workshops specifically focused on legal matters as they relate to child care. "The Pro Bono Partnership's resources are most welcome," said Kathy Halas, Executive Director of the Child Care Council, who sees the Partnership as an important partner in the Council's work to strengthen early care and education quality and business operations. "The Council has received tremendous guidance and assistance from the Pro Bono Partnership for many years," said Halas, "and we've become increasingly aware of the need for their legal input and support in a variety of areas, including board governance and employment practices."

Kimball, who comes to the Partnership from the law firm of Hogan & Hartson, will serve as the director of the child care initiative. She officially joined the Partnership's staff in

January 2009, after several months as a volunteer. Kimball has substantial experience in employment law, a primary area of concern for child care centers.

Recently, the Partnership assigned one of its volunteers, Toni Anne Nichels, Senior Employment and HR Counsel at Xerox Corporation, to review the Ossining Children's Center's employee handbook and advise on a number of other human resources issues. "Without the advice of the attorneys like Toni Anne, we could easily make a lot of costly mistakes," stated Howard Milbert, Executive Director of the Ossining Children's Center and Co-President of the Westchester Early Childhood Director's Association. "On OCC's tight budget, there is no way we could afford to pay for the high level of expertise the Partnership brings to us." Aside from a desire to be in compliance with best practices, Milbert says his Board feels a special sense of responsibility toward staff because they are entrusted with caring for and educating children, "the most important work of a civil society." "The Partnership can take pride in the significant role they play in helping us in our work," he continued. "This new initiative will similarly benefit other early childhood centers and I welcome it wholeheartedly. It is wonderful to have a new advocate for child care in the County."

The Pro Bono Partnership is a nonprofit legal assistance organization supported by annual gifts and grants. It provides ready access to legal services for nonprofits in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and actively promotes best practices and accountability within the nonprofit sector. The Partnership's clients are community-based nonprofit organizations that serve the disadvantaged or otherwise contribute to the quality of life in local communities. These nonprofits regularly need legal advice, but would have to sacrifice critical funding for important programs in order to hire an attorney. The Partnership provides its services at no charge, with the exception of modest fees for assistance with incorporations and for some workshops. It leverages its own resources and in-house legal staff by recruiting attorneys from leading corporations and law firms to provide pro bono assistance. Several hundred attorneys with a wide range of legal expertise volunteer through the Partnership each year.

Nonprofit child care centers in need of brief, general legal information can call the Partnership's legal resource helpline at 914-328-0674 and ask for Leslie Kimball. Centers that need the assistance of an attorney on specific legal matters and that are not already clients of the Partnership should apply by filling out the Request for Legal Advice form on the Partnership's website:  
<http://www.probonopartner.org/requestform.htm>.

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