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Registration Open for Inaugural Richard K. Gilbert Policy Advocacy Competition Hosted by DC Justice Lab

Law school competition judges include DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, Councilmember Christina Henderson, Councilmember Brooke Pinto, and Councilmember Zachary Parker

November 15th, 2023 Washington, D.C. - Registration opens today for the inaugural Richard K. Gilbert Policy Advocacy Competition, a law school competition designed to encourage law students to pursue careers in legislative advocacy. The competition, hosted by DC Justice Lab, is an opportunity for students to build their legal skills in the policy realm, including legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, and written and oral communication. Judges have been selected for their expertise in policy advocacy and include DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, Councilmember Christina Henderson, Councilmember Brooke Pinto, and Councilmember Zachary Parker.

“I am pleased to join the DC Justice Lab by supporting this important opportunity for students to flex their advocacy muscles,” said Chairman Mendelson. “This competition will ensure we have more policy-focused advocates working with District lawmakers in the fight for justice, and a diverse and inclusive system.”

In its inaugural year, the competition will be open to students from any law school. Eight teams representing eight law schools will respond to the competition problem with proposed legislation and a fact sheet explaining their proposal. Mock legislative hearings will test teams’ oral advocacy on behalf of their bills. Teams will be scored by judges on their written work and oral advocacy, advancing through rounds tournament-style. The competition will conclude with an awards presentation and reception where the winning team will receive a \$5,000 prize.

“We are excited to offer an experiential learning opportunity focused on lawmaking and legislative drafting. Students learn a lot from reading case law in their classes, but it’s crucial to recognize the power of change beyond the courtroom.” said Patrice Sulton, founder and executive director of DC Justice Lab. “This is an opportunity to teach aspiring candidates, Hill staffers, and movement lawyers how to craft solutions to our most pressing community challenges.”

The event honors Richard K. Gilbert, a champion of legal justice who believed that lawyers must not only help individual clients, but also help society at large by changing laws for the better. Rich was an adjunct professor at American University’s Washington College of Law, a forceful advocate for criminal justice reform, and a mentor to DC Justice Lab’s founding executive director. The Gilbert Policy Advocacy Competition honors Rich’s passion and his mentorship of younger lawyers to become change agents.

To register for the Richard K. Gilbert Policy Advocacy Competition visit <https://dcjusticelab.org/policy-advocacy-competition>

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ABOUT DC JUSTICE LAB

DC Justice Lab is a team of law and policy experts researching, organizing, and advocating for large-scale changes to the District of Columbia's criminal legal system. We develop smarter safety solutions that are evidence-driven, community-rooted, and racially just. We aim to fully transform the District's approach to public safety and make it a national leader in justice reform.