

# The Legal Clinic Fund for Local News

The Legal Clinic Fund for Local News, a collaborative fund to support the growth and sustainability of university-based clinics across the United States, was founded on the belief that access to legal support is a critical element of local news ecosystems. The Fund provides legal support to local newsrooms and journalists that seek to advance and defend first amendment rights, media freedom, and transparency in their communities.

This Fund is a catalyst for the expansion and sustainability of existing clinics that provide increased legal resources and representation for newsrooms and journalists, especially for those who are least likely to receive it from traditional sources. Ultimately, the Fund seeks to ensure that any local newsroom or journalist that needs legal support can access it.

Since inception, the Fund has awarded \$5.46 million in grants to 12 partner clinics.

The Fund is currently supported by Democracy Fund, The Klarman Family Foundation, and Solidarity Giving. The Miami Foundation serves as fiscal sponsor for the Fund. Past partners of the Fund include The Abrams Foundation and Heising-Simons Foundation. Learn more at <https://localnewslab.org/legal-clinic-fund/>.

## **Cardozo School of Law Filmmakers Legal Clinic**

The Cardozo School of Law Filmmakers Legal Clinic provides free assistance to filmmakers and video journalists engaged in social justice and visual advocacy to help them navigate legal hurdles and make sure their stories can be told. The clinic will hire a teaching fellow to expand the number of students it can train and clients it can represent, with a particular focus on those from historically underserved communities. It will also expand community training sessions, provide additional programming for documentarians and video journalists, and increase its pop-up clinics which offer legal services to underserved communities of filmmakers. *2020 – 2024 grantee.*

## **Case Western Reserve University School of Law's Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center**

Case Western Reserve University was one of the first law schools in the country to start a clinical program, over 45 years ago. Today it handles more than 100 cases a year, supporting community-based clients in matters dealing with free speech, free press, and government access issues, while training the next generation of speech and press advocates. With this funding, it will engage more students and expand its capacity to represent local journalists, and will represent members of the community, particularly BIPOC people, in civil rights and speech-defense litigation involving First Amendment rights. *2020 - 2022 grantee.*

## **Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic**

The Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic will expand its Local Journalism Project, a special initiative of the clinic that serves local and regional newsgatherers in New York, Vermont, Pennsylvania and nearby states who cannot otherwise afford representation. The Local Journalism Project will help journalists leverage freedom of information laws to unlock critical public records, defend journalists against retaliation from policymakers and

represent newsgatherers who are sued for defamation by defendants attempting to chill expression. This grant will allow the Local Journalism Project to expand both the number and the geographical reach of the matters it can handle on behalf of local journalists and media outlets. *2019 – 2024 grantee.*

### **Duke Law School First Amendment Clinic**

The First Amendment Clinic at Duke Law works to protect and advance the First Amendment freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and petition. The Clinic advises and represents individuals, journalists, and other organizations with First Amendment concerns or claims, who otherwise could not afford the assistance of lawyers with First Amendment expertise. The Clinic also advocates for pro-speech legislation, argues in favor of pro-speech changes to the law, and provides education and outreach on free speech issues. Grant funds will support the hiring of an additional licensed attorney at the Clinic whose primary focus will be supporting local journalists in their efforts to obtain public records or access courts and government meetings.

### **Harvard Law School's Cyberlaw Clinic**

The Harvard Law School's Cyberlaw Clinic will launch the Initiative for a Representative First Amendment (IfRFA), which will fund two years of fellowships for law students from backgrounds underrepresented in First Amendment practice. The fellows will have access to seminars, workshops and professional support to advance their careers, and be placed at clinics around the country to expand their capacity to take on First Amendment fights locally. The program will prioritize students that are at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities and clinics chosen to take fellows will receive formalized inclusion training to enhance their clinical teaching and practice activities. *2019 - 2024 grantee.*

### **Inter American University of Puerto Rico Faculty of Law's Access to Information Clinic**

The Inter American University of Puerto Rico's Access to Information Clinic aims to strengthen investigative journalism in Puerto Rico by providing legal assistance to investigative journalists and others seeking highly impactful public information. This grant will help the clinic increase its ability to represent investigative journalists, independent news media, regional newspapers, individuals, and non-governmental organizations seeking government information that will impact public discussions on different topics in Puerto Rico. *2020 - 2024 grantee.*

### **Tulane University First Amendment Law Clinic**

Tulane School of Law's First Amendment Law Clinic's (the Clinic) mission is to defend core First Amendment principles through legal representation of members of the press and individuals, and to educate the lawyers of tomorrow on First Amendment values and philosophies. An area of highest priority for the Clinic is to provide support for local journalism. Since its inception the Clinic has chosen to prioritize representation of the local media because of the indispensable role that those journalists play in our collective public discourse. Funding will support a full-time Louisiana-licensed lawyer to serve as a media support fellow, a "Sunshine Fellow", to lead public records litigation, help conduct intake for regional journalists, mentor students, and negotiate and litigate other matters supporting local media. This individual will also be responsible for identifying local journalists with whom the Clinic should meet and will lead the creation of Louisiana-specific "Know Your Rights" materials.

### **University of Buffalo Civil Liberties & Transparency Clinic**

The Civil Liberties & Transparency Clinic will expand its focus on supporting journalism and investigative reporting, particularly with respect to independent journalists, newsrooms, and nonprofits in Western New York and the surrounding regions. The grant will fund a new year round Free Speech & Transparency Legal Fellow and two summer law students to ensure the clinic can provide uninterrupted support of their expanded docket. This added capacity will allow the clinic to represent clients they have not had the capacity to serve previously. *2019 – 2024 grantee.*

### **University of California Irvine Intellectual Property, Arts, and Technology Clinic**

The Press Freedom and Transparency practice at the Intellectual Property, Arts, and Technology (IPAT) Clinic at University of California Irvine will provide pro bono legal services to independent journalists, documentary filmmakers, bloggers, media advocacy groups, and others, with a particular focus on California. This grant will expand IPAT's capacity to provide pre-publication legal advice for high-risk investigative reporting, fight to unseal court records and unearth government records, and challenge unconstitutional restraints on press freedoms such as gag orders. IPAT will also offer local newsrooms seminars on journalists' legal rights. *2019 –2024 grantee.*

### **University of Georgia School of Law First Amendment Clinic**

The University of Georgia School of Law's First Amendment Clinic defends and advances the rights of free speech, press, assembly, and petition via regional litigation and advocacy, while providing law students with the legal practice and real-world experience to become leaders on First Amendment issues. The Clinic also serves as a resource for journalists, students, government employees, and members of the public on issues of open access and free expression in order to promote a better-informed citizenry. Funding will support the creation of a Georgia Journalism & Access Project (GJAP) attorney position that would expand the number, depth, and geographic scope of the Clinic's current services to local journalists, including both litigation and non-litigation client representation as well as external presentations/trainings on topics related to government access/transparency and press freedoms. *2022 – 2025 grantee.*

### **University of Virginia School of Law's First Amendment Clinic**

At the University of Virginia School of Law's First Amendment Clinic, law students work closely with lawyers from the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press on timely and vital matters involving free speech and press freedom. The clinic will hire a full-time Clinical Legal Fellow in partnership with the Reporters Committee, which will expand the clinic's reach, develop new relationships with local news organizations, and engage more law students in support of issues facing local newsrooms in the mid-Atlantic region. *2020 - 2022 grantee.*

### **Yale University's Media Freedom & Information Access Clinic**

Yale University's Media Freedom & Information Access (MFIA) Clinic is dedicated to increasing government transparency, defending the essential work of news gatherers, and protecting freedom of expression. This grant will enable the clinic to hire a clinical fellow to develop new infrastructures for providing legal services to those who gather and report the news at the state and local level, primarily in Connecticut and New England. The fellow will supervise an expanded student team at the MFIA Clinic dedicated to providing legal services to local journalists and publishers, including pre-publication advice, affirmative newsgathering litigation, and defense of published reports. *2020 -2022 grantee.*

